

LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

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No. 1072.—VOL. XLIII.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 17, 1883.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



["YOU MUSTN'T CRY," SAID CECIL, GENTLY. "I CANNOT BEAR TO SEE YOU."]

HER GREAT MISTAKE.

CHAPTER I.

HER name was Florence, this slight, brown-eyed maiden, of whose mistake we are going to tell. It was not a family name among the Warburtons. It could not have been chosen from any fond associations with the fair Italian city, since neither Colonel Warburton nor his wife had ever been there. But when the eagerly-expected child proved to be a girl the young mother would hear of no other name; and so the Colonel, who loved her with an idolatrous, passionate tenderness, buried the time-honoured claims of the family "Janet" and "Agnes" in oblivion, thereby mortally offending his two sisters—and our heroine was called Florence.

That was more than eighteen years ago, and now she sat in a long, bare-looking apartment of a house at Kensington, which the globes, maps, and other educational implements scattered about, pronounced to be a school-room.

Poor little Florence! That room was more familiar to her than any other. For fifteen years she had been an inmate of Miss Frost's establishment—for fifteen years home had been nothing to her but an empty name.

She could remember nothing of the life she led before she came to Kensington; only in her recollection there was a faint, faded image of a face lovelier and more tender than any she saw at Connaught House. That face must have been her mother's, through whose early death she began her school days so early.

She had nothing to complain of at Connaught House. The girls loved her, the governesses indulged her; the stately principal herself had kind looks for her favourite pupil, only it was school, not home; and when three times a year nineteen girls took their departure for the holidays, a kind of wild longing would seize the lonely twentieth that she, too, had some friends waiting to receive her.

But though invitations came sometimes from loving school-fellows, not one was Florence allowed to accept.

"It is your papa's wish," Miss Frost would explain, condescendingly. "Until he returns

to England he desires you should make no acquaintance beyond your own family."

"But I haven't got any family," said Florence, with a sigh.

The schoolmistress answered nothing. She herself was much perplexed that neither of Colonel Warburton's sisters took any notice of his daughter. They both resided a great part of the year in London; surely it would have been easy for them to call at Connaught House and inspect their niece's progress!

Regularly every half-year came handsome cheques for Miss Warburton's expenses; regularly once a month came a loving, tender letter from the father to his child, and the girl grew to regard those letters as her greatest pleasure. She learned to look forward with a yearning anxiety for the time when she should go out to India to her father.

It was an afternoon in summer. One more week and the school-room would be deserted, its bright, girlish inmates would have flown for the holidays.

Florence Warburton, sitting near the open window with a piece of fancy-work in her hand, was the centre of attraction. It was the

hour of recreation, and a group had gathered round their favourite.

"Promise you'll be here when I come back," said a little fair-haired child, nestling against Miss Warburton lovingly. "I couldn't bear this place without you!"

Florence smiled.

"I expect I shall be here. Miss Frost thinks papa won't care for me to go out to him before winter."

"And you really want to go to India?" cried half-a-dozen voices.

"I want to see papa. He is all I have, you know."

"But couldn't he come to England?"

"He doesn't like England, Osele."

"Well," said a tall, graceful girl, the beauty of the school, "one thing, Florence, Colonel Warburton won't keep you long. Girls marry directly in India."

"Do they?"

"Yes," went on the young mistress, "and they generally make good matches. I do wish I were you, Florence! Why you'll be a bride before the year is out!"

"I don't want to be married," said Florence, slowly. "It seems to me it would be very tiresome!"

Half-a-dozen eyes looked at her in amazement.

"Married people are so funny," went on Florence; "and they always seem so full of bother!"

"What married people have you seen?" asked Belle, a little mournfully. "Only sober fogies of fifty and sixty. It's very different when they're young."

"Is it?"

"Of course it is! The husband thinks of nothing but his wife. He loves her better than anything in the world, and is always trying to make her happy!"

Florence Warburton's face glowed.

"I should like that!" she said, wistfully. "To be loved like that would be better than being married!"

"You dreadful child!" cried Belle, reprovingly. "People mustn't be loved like that unless they are married, or going to be!"

They were interrupted. The door opened abruptly, and a servant entered.

"Miss Warburton is wanted to see visitors in the drawing-room."

Never since her father left her in Miss Frost's care, a little toddling child of three, had such an announcement been made to Florence. She started up in confusion, her cheeks still flushed by the recent conversation.

"Had I better change my dress, Belle?"

"No!" returned the beauty; "you couldn't look nicer than you do, white suits you wonderfully."

And indeed it would have been hard to find a sweeter face than Florence's. Indeed might be the beauty of the school, but she had not half her friend's charm of expression. The colonel's daughter was a slight, graceful girl, barely over middle height; her face was a perfect oval, her large, deeply-set brown eyes were fringed with long dark lashes, contrasting well with the strange purity of her complexion; her cheeks had the faintest wild-rose bloom; her mouth was small and regular; and her little head was framed by masses of soft hair, whose hue was like nothing so much as the tint of a chestnut newly snatched from its shell. She wore a white dress trimmed with lace and ribbons of turquoise blue. A creature once seen not easily forgotten; one surely formed for love and sympathy.

With feet which would hardly do her bidding, so nervous and excited had she become through the unexpected summons, Florence Warburton reached the drawing-room door; one hope, one wild desire uppermost at her heart—that her father had taken her by surprise, and come to England without warning.

Her hopes fell as she entered the drawing-room. Miss Frost sat in earnest conversation with a lady—a middle-aged woman, dressed in elegant mourning; a face which was best

described by negatives, not large, not small, not stern, not placid, but with a strange restlessness in the small eyes, and a something of cunningness in the expression of well-bred calm. Miss Frost took her pupil's hand.

"Florence, this is your Aunt Janet, your father's elder sister, Mrs. Fox; she has come here to make your acquaintance."

The girl bowed her aunt's small ferret-like eyes regarding her with close scrutiny; then Mrs. Fox advanced two fingers of her daintily gloved hands. She never offered her niece a warmer salutation, and when the fingers had gone through the ordeal safely, she turned to Miss Frost, and said, speaking as calmly as though Florence were a lay figure that could neither hear nor feel,—

"Her mother's very image, not a trace of the Warburtons about her!"

The girl's lips drooped painfully. Miss Frost saw tears gathering in her velvet eyes.

"Miss Warburton is a very sweet girl, madam; I assure you, we shall all miss her. Perhaps you would like to be alone while you make the communication."

"By no means!" returned Mrs. Fox, graciously. "As we have never seen each other before, I can have no private confidences with my niece. How old are you?" to Florence, abruptly.

"Eighteen and a half!"

"Ah! when did you last hear from your father?"

"It is six weeks ago. There was no letter by the last mail. Oh!" alarmed by the look of pity Miss Frost cast on her, "Oh! surely he is not ill? You have not come here to tell me that?"

"He died some weeks ago, probably directly after the date of his last letter."

Dead! there came a sudden blank in Florence's vision, dead! then what mattered anything? He was her all, her very life was bound up in him. Dead! oh, why did the summer sunshine pour through the window if indeed this misery had come upon her?

"Yes," returned Mrs. Fox, with that resignation we all feel for others' sorrow, "and you ought to be very thankful he was spared suffering. The end was quite sudden, and he was buried with full military honours. Your uncle has all the particulars at home, and you shall see them if you are a good girl."

Four Florence, she tried to speak to say something; but she could not, the words stuck in her throat. It mattered little Mrs. Fox was fully capable of sustaining the conversation.

"Of course your position is sadly changed by this event. Your circumstances are quite altered."

"Yes! I am all alone now."

"That is a very ungrateful remark, my dear. You have two aunts, an uncle, and several cousins. It would be absurd to pretend regret for a father you have never seen for fifteen years."

Florence felt it all the same.

"Your uncle is appointed your guardian," went on Mrs. Fox; "and until you come of age your home will be with us. Of course this is very generous on our part, for the provision to which you are entitled is next to nothing."

Miss Frost, who knew something about officers' pay and the allowance made to their children, doubted this; she interposed, and said kindly, she would gladly keep Florence at Connaught House and assist her in earning her own living.

Mrs. Fox stared.

"You mean well, my dear madam, but it is impossible. Colonel Warburton's daughter can only accept charity from her kindred. My husband and myself are quite willing to accept the burden my brother has bequeathed to us. I will write and appoint a day for my niece to join us at our country seat; and I trust, Florence, I shall find you in a more dutiful state of mind."

She shook hands with Miss Frost and sailed from the room. The principal turned to Florence with a sigh.

"My dear child, I am so sorry for you."

Susan Frost was an old maid, but she had a large spice of human kindness in her heart. Sitting down beside the trembling girl, she comforted her after her own fashion.

"And so that is your aunt, my child; I have often wondered she never came to see you. It puzzled me too, that, being so young, your father did not leave you with her instead of sending you to school; but I understand it now."

"Oh, how am I to live with her? It will be dreadful! Dear Miss Frost, won't you let me stay with you?"

"The power all rests with your aunt, Florence; her husband is your guardian, and for the next two years and a half he has the absolute right to choose your home."

Florence was sobbing bitterly.

"I was so happy only this morning, no happy and full of hope, and now I am alone in the world and—a beggar!"

"Hush," said Miss Frost, solemnly, "you are not that; you may be poor in comparison with others, but I am positive your father has left you enough to pay Mrs. Fox the expense of keeping you; if not that, I don't believe she would insist upon having you."

There was grief and wailing throughout Connaught House; not even the near prospect of the holidays could console the young ladies for the loss of their favourite; wistful anticipations of school "without Florence" filled every heart. No one could remember a time when that slim, girlish figure had not made the sunshine of the stately academy.

Miss Frost was not idle. She had always provided Florence with a toilette suitable to a gentleman's daughter; she now procured a simple tasteful mourning outfit, ladylike and becoming, though not extravagant. She had a kind of idea that if she left this outfit to Mrs. Fox, Florence would come off indifferently in the matter of clothes. She knew that she would never be forgiven for this expenditure, and that no attempt would be made to reimburse her; but she did not grudge the money. She was a prosperous woman, and she loved Florence Warburton dearly.

A short note arrived from Mrs. Fox appointing a day on which her niece was to proceed to Foxgrove Court, the family place in Kent. She sent no money for the journey, she made no mention of any cost.

Miss Frost's blood fairly boiled; she would have sent a maid with Florence, only she feared to provoke her aunt's anger; so she drove to the station, and herself conducted Miss Warburton to the care of a guard, ascended the platform at which she would have to change, and otherwise provided for her comfort; this done, she hurried back to Connaught House to keep an appointment.

"The train starts in five minutes, dear," was her farewell. "I wish I could wait to see you off, but I'm afraid of being late for Lady Delany."

She was gone. Left alone, poor Florence leant back in her corner, and wished herself back in the house, which for fifteen years had been her home. The bell rang, a shrill whistle sounded, the train was on the point of starting, when a late passenger appeared, and the guard, abruptly forgetting all his promises respecting Florence's seclusion, flung open the door of her carriage, which was nearest, and tumbled in the new comer just as the train started slowly out of the platform.

Florence Warburton was too wrapped up in her own sad thoughts to notice her companion; and he, bitterly reproaching himself for the tardiness which had lost him a seat in a smoking compartment, was quite as neglectful of her, and seated himself at as great a distance as the dimensions of the carriage would allow, while he tried to obtain amusement from Punch.

But Punch does not take long to read. In half an hour the traveller had exhausted both that and the *Globe*, then he bestowed himself of his fellow-passenger. Her face was still averted from him, but there was something in

the unstudied grace of her attitude, in the confidence of her pose, which aroused his interest. He drew a trifle nearer, meaning to commence the acquaintance by offering her *Punch*, when he discovered she was crying.

There was no mistake about it; he could see the tears wending their way slowly down her cheeks; he could see the heaving of her bosom. Cecil Fane's first impulse was to course the ill-luck which gave him such a companion; his second to try to rouse her from grief.

He was quite young, barely five-and-twenty, somewhat warm-hearted young fellow, just a little spoiled by prosperity and the sunshine of wealth, but still generous and open as the day, a man who might flirt with London belles, and say pretty things to burlesque actresses; but who would never injure a woman who trusted him, and never break a promise to a creature weaker than himself.

"What is the matter?"

Florence started. The voice was rich and musical, the tone low, and almost caressing. She started in confusion. What had she done? What offence could she have been guilty of, that a strange gentleman should address her thus unceremoniously?

Cecil had utterly forgotten the code of etiquette.

"You mustn't cry!" he said, very gently, and taking her hand; "I can't bear to see you!"

"I am very sorry!" she answered; "only I can't help it. I am so miserable!"

She was sitting up now, and he could see her face, a sweet, childish face, with big brown eyes, and a strange charm of its own in spite of the tear-stains on her cheeks.

"What is the matter?" he repeated again; and then his eyes rested on her black dress.

Florence answered nothing; she wiped her eyes, and tried to turn her face away from his gaze.

"I think I understand," said Cecil, who felt remarkably awkward in his new role of comforter. "You have lost someone dear to you?"

"I have lost my father, and he was all I had in the world!"

"But crying won't bring him back!" said Mr. Fane; "and I dare say you have other friends left?"

She shook her head.

"He was all I had; and that is not all—he died far away in India. I never knew anything about it until they told me he was dead. Fancy, while I was looking for his letters he was lying in his grave!"

Cecil took one of the little hands in his caressingly.

"Do you know, I have just come from India. Was your father in the army? Perhaps I knew him."

"He was colonel in the 90th Regiment."

Fane started.

"You don't mean you are poor Warburton's daughter?"

"Indeed, I am! Oh! sir, did you know him?"

"I knew him well! He was the kindest friend I had in the five years I spent in India. I assure you, Miss Warburton, but for him I might be dead, too, instead of coming home on sick leave to rejoice my mother's heart! He nursed me through a dangerous illness as tenderly as if I had been his brother."

A strange brightness came into her eyes.

"I am so glad to see anyone who knew him!"

"And you are the little girl the colonel used to speak of—that he expected out next spring?"

"Yes! Oh, it seemed so cruel! I had counted the months and years so long!"

"It was a blow to me when I heard the news," Cecil said, simply, "though I was prepared for it."

"Prepared! They told me it was a sudden death!"

"Suddenly at the last, perhaps. Miss Warburton, may I tell you something that may soothe your sorrow? Your father had been

slowly dying for years. I have heard people say he never recovered your mother's loss—that her death killed him slowly, but surely. Grief took fifteen years to do its work; but if you ask me my opinion, the colonel died of a broken heart. He never could have been happy in this world. He was a good man and ready for the next. If ever death ought not to be mourned over that death was his!"

Florence looked into the young man's face, and said, wistfully,—

"It may be selfish, but, oh, I cannot feel as you do! You see he was all I had!"

"Surely you have relations?"

"I have an aunt. I am going to her now, but she does not love me."

"She must love you in time. Miss Warburton, you must be dear to many people for your own sake and many others; my mother, among them, will love you for your father's."

"I should like to see your mother," said Florence, sadly. "Oh, I wish I had a mother!"

"My mother lives at Westfield, and I am sure she will be delighted to see you."

For the first time her face brightened, giving him a faint idea of what it might have been undimmed by sorrow.

"Why, I am going to Westfield! My aunt lives only three miles off."

"Then, I expect she is a friend of ours. May I know her name?"

"Mrs. Fox. She lives at Foxgrove Court."

"Of course I know her. We have been intimate for years. Then we shall be neighbours for some little time, Miss Warburton; and you will try and look on me as a friend, for your father's sake?"

"Indeed, I will," said Florence, softly.

"My mother, Lady Emily Fane, will be glad to be your friend, too," said Cecil. "I expect she will ask your aunt to spare you to us a great deal."

"Won't you please tell me something about my aunt, Mr. Fane? Has she many children?"

"Half-a-dozen. But some of them are not children; the eldest son is as old as I am. Then there are three young ladies' out, and two little girls in the school-room."

"Only one son?"

"Only one; the hope and pride of your aunt's life. She thinks the whole world might be searched through in vain to find the equal of John Warburton Fox!"

Florence laughed, as he meant she should.

"Then you don't like him?"

"I never said so."

Cecil Fane succeeded in his object. He managed to make the hours of that long journey pass pleasantly for Florence Warburton. He warmed the sad, lonely girl in the sunshine of his own kind, genial manner. He gave her just that protection a timid, inexperienced traveller requires, and directed her thoughts so well that the monotony of the flat, uninteresting country was hardly felt; and when the train stopped at Westfield she said,—

"Already!"

It was a small rural station, with but two or three persons waiting on the platform. Cecil handed Florence out, and then she saw him clasped in the arms of a stately, silver-haired old lady, and heard a sweet voice bidding him welcome home. She knew he had been away five years; not for worlds would she have interrupted the rapture of that reunion. Only she stood there alone unnoticed, with an aching sense of solitude and pain at her heart which increased when she turned her eyes towards Lady Emily and her son.

The station-master came up to her, and asked civilly where she wished the luggage sent. Florence answered she was going to Foxgrove Court. The man shook his head. There was a grand flower-show the other side of the Court. He had seen Mrs. Fox and the young ladies driving to it; no doubt they had forgotten to send to meet the London train.

Poor Florence stood in doubt and perplexity.

"I could walk," she said, hopefully; "but then there is the luggage."

"That's easily managed, miss. The carrier's cart's here, he goes right past Foxgrove Court. It's a longish walk, but I don't see how else you are to get there."

But before she had done more than point out her luggage, she felt a hand upon her shoulder.

"I am afraid your aunt has forgotten to send the carriage, Miss Warburton; my brougham is here, you must let me take you home."

"But,"—Florence looked as if she would like to accept—"it will be troubling you so."

"No trouble at all," returned Lady Emily.

"Our house is on the road to Foxgrove; we will get out there and send you on to the Court."

It spoke much for the delicacy of mother and son, that never by word or sign did they mention their own joy. They devoted themselves entirely to their little guest until the carriage stopped, and they said good-bye.

"If only Aunt Fox were like Lady Emily," thought Florence, wistfully, "I could love her dearly."

The Court was a substantial, red-brick building, bearing about it signs of ample means, though none of exaggerated wealth.

A servant received Miss Warburton from Lady Emily's carriage, and asked her civilly enough if she would like some tea; being tired and hungry Florence accepted; but the weak, lukewarm fluid which presently appeared, flanked by a thick slice of bread-and-butter, was very different to the fare enjoyed at Connaught House, and our heroine did not do justice to it.

Mary, the maid, stood waiting to show her her room—up the grand staircase, down a long corridor, and then upstairs again, to a dreary, whitewashed region, where no attempt at decoration or adornment seemed to have been made. The passage was quite bare, the doors simply numbered in black paint to distinguish them from each other. Florence's heart sank within her as Mary pushed one open.

A moderate-sized apartment, whose roof and walls sloped to such an extent that in many places it was impossible to stand upright, and which was destitute of fireplace and window, being lighted only by a skylight. A small, iron camp-bedstead, a washstand with a small looking-glass hanging over it, and one solitary chair, such was the accommodation prepared by Mrs. Fox for her brother's only child.

Fortunately, Lady Emily had insisted upon Florence's luggage coming on her carriage, and it was soon brought up. Mary, touched by the desolation of the young girl's arrival, placed the trunks to their best advantage, and even offered her aid in unpacking; but this the orphan declined.

"Can you tell me when I shall see my aunt?"

"Mrs. Fox is expected at seven, miss, and dinner is at half-past."

Florence looked at her watch; it was barely five.

"I had better go downstairs when I am ready?" she said, inquiringly.

"I should think so, miss. There is no one at home but Mr. John."

Florence looked so perplexed, that the servant explained,—

"The young master, miss, Mr. John Warburton Fox. We call him Mr. John."

Heart sick and weary as she was, Florence knew she must not give way. Occupation was her best friend; so she unpacked her possessions, arranging her treasures so as to give a home-like air to her humble room.

Then she bathed her face in cold water, and felt unexpectably refreshed. In fact, by the time her hair was brushed and recoiled round her graceful head, she was quite a different creature.

She had never expected much kindness at her aunt's hands, so she had no reason to feel disappointed; and, at least, the day had brought her two new friends, of whose very

existence she was ignorant when she rose in the morning.

She chose from among Miss Frost's purchases a soft, silky dress of some gauzy substance, trimmed with crape, and finished at the neck and sleeves with soft white lisse. Dressed in this, with jet ornaments on her neck and arms, the summer sunlight turning her hair to burnished gold, Florence Warburton went downstairs in search of the drawing-room.

She opened at least three doors before she was successful; then she found herself in a handsome apartment, furnished with more magnificence than good taste. There were no books about—none of those nameless trifles which show a room is inhabited by people of refinement and breeding. The most homelike thing which greeted Florence's eyes was a grand piano which stood open, as though inviting her to come and try it.

There was no one in the house, Mary had said (Miss Warburton forgot Mr. John), so why should she not play to herself?

Florence sat down and struck a few chords. She had a real talent for music, and the sounds she evoked were very different from what that piano usually brought forth.

They seemed so to Mr. John in his distant smoking-room; besides, no one at the Court played the piano at that hour.

His curiosity was aroused, and he found his way to the drawing-room just as Florence, gaining confidence, had begun to sing.

Mr. John Warburton Fox—Tony as he was called in the bosom of his family—felt much surprised. He knew that his mother expected a "poor relation" as a sort of governess to the children. He had even heard that very day fixed for her coming; but he never connected that fact with the brilliant vision at the piano—the slight, graceful girl who looked like some fair princess in her soft, black draperies, and whose hair shone like a golden cloud.

He stared in silent amazement until the song ended—then he went forward.

"I was not aware my mother expected visitors," he began, in his most affected manner. "I am sure she will be desolated that she was not at home to receive you."

Florence saw a small, badly-formed man, considerably under middle height, dressed in the extreme of fashion, with the reddest complexion, the sunniest hair, and the weakest, most watery blue eyes it had ever been her fate to meet.

He was in her aunt's drawing-room—he spoke of his mother, and yet it never dawned upon Miss Warburton that he was her cousin. There was something about him which told the girl he was not quite a gentleman; and, as yet, she did not know that Mr. Fox's whole fortune had been made in a retail business, of which distinguished undertaking he continued to accept the profits, though he had long ceased to take an active part in the enterprise.

"May I not be allowed," began Tony, waxing more florid in his compliments, "to know the name of our beauteous guest, to learn whose sweetest voice has enraptured my fancy?"

"I don't understand," said Florence, bluntly; "you can't be Aunt Janet's son?"

"Indeed I am,"—then, as the truth dawned on him, "and you must be the little cousin we are expecting to-day?"

"I am Florence Warburton."

Before she understood his object he was close beside her.

"Cousins are like sisters, you know," said Tony, insinuatingly. "You're a pretty little thing—give me a kiss to show you're glad to see me."

His lips were near hers—she could feel his hot breath on her cheeks. Burning with indignation the girl brought her fair white hand down upon the ears of John Warburton Fox with all the force she could muster.

"How dare you!" she cried; "how dared you insult me!"

"Insult you, indeed!" cried Tony, fiercely.

"I was only giving you an affectionate welcome, you little vixen."

"What is the meaning of this conduct, Miss Warburton? Mr. Fox and I shall indeed regret our charity if this is how you reward us!"

In the doorway stood Mrs. Fox. She had returned from the flower-show and reached the drawing-room in time to hear Florence's passionate protest, and to see her raise her hand against Tony. Fury fairly beamed in Mrs. Fox's ferret-like eyes. She literally hissed out the words as she repeated her question.

"What do you mean by it, eh, miss? A nice way you must have been brought up if you can't be left alone ten minutes without trying to inveigle the heir of an honourable family. I am ashamed of you! Go to your own room at once!"

The greater part of this speech was Greek to Florence Warburton. One part only did she understand—the permission to retire, and that she obeyed at once, leaving Tony still rubbing his injured member, and his mother almost speechless from indignation.

CHAPTER II.

SOMEWHERE in the heart of London, within half-an-hour's walk of the most fashionable regions, there lies a vast district which has never been properly explored—and probably never will be—where it is an almost unheard-of thing for any one house to be tenanted by less than three or four families, and where one room is considered quite sufficient for all ordinary purposes.

All classes, all grades are represented in the district I speak of. It has not the squalid misery of the East-end; but it has even more pitiable distress, for the great feature of the locality is keeping aloof.

Lawyer's clerks, ballet-dancers, cheap educational drudges, lone widows, the failures of every walk of life find a refuge here. Those who were rich once—those who never expected to be poor come and find a shelter secure, that, so long as their rent is paid, no questions will be asked, and no one come to trouble their solitude.

Such a place was Caroline-street, one of the numerous offshoots of the district we have named. It may have been called after the unlucky consort of George IV., it may have been called after a sweetheart of the builder. It had been new and imposing once; it was old and respectable now.

You might have wandered down Caroline-street at any hour of the day or night and no harm would have happened to you; but you might have known every inhabitant of the dingy thoroughfare and not have been able to produce one who at some time past or present had not known the grip of hunger.

No. 45 was about the middle of the street—a house remarkable for its dingy chocolate colour, and an extreme scarcity of curtains; yet the rooms were large and lofty, and you might have driven a hearse-and-six up the staircase had such been your royal will and pleasure.

No. 45 had many inhabitants, but our business is exclusively with the third floor back, which was let to a woman of the name of Daw. History had never revealed whether she was married or single—wife, maid, or widow; she had been a lady once, that was an accepted fact in Caroline-street. She was an honest soul, who never refused a kindness or did anyone an ill-turn, that was another; but how she came to sink to her present condition—in what peculiar form trouble had come to her—these were questions Caroline-street felt powerless to answer.

She sat at her rickety table one bright summer afternoon, working busily at her ceaseless stitching. Miss Daw was a machinist by calling, a slender, fragile-looking woman, with the remains of great beauty, and the unmistakable stamp of refinement on her face. In looking up from her work her eyes fell upon

an old newspaper, in which the material entrusted to her had been wrapped; those wandering eyes rested for a moment upon the column of the *Times*.

Only a moment; but it changed her whole life and the current of this story. With one passionate cry the woman pushed her work away from her, buried her face in her hands and burst into a fit of sobbing—all the more bitter because it was so quiet and voiceless; that it had all the silence of despair.

"Dead!" she moaned, as she grew calmer—"dead! Oh, my darling, it can't be. After waiting and hoping, after living on through all this misery just for the chance of seeing your face again, it can't be that you're gone!"

Again her eyes sought the paper, and again the much-loved name stood forth in cruel distinctness among the long list of the departed. The woman dropped the paper with a bitter cry.

"A curse upon the woman whose lies parted us!—a curse upon the pride which kept me from justifying myself while he could have heard me! Oh, my darling!"—and she stretched forth her hand, as though appealing to some human creature listening—"Oh, my darling, at last you know the truth! You're beyond the shadows now, my darling, and you know your Doris loved you as her own life!"

It was long before she grew quite calm; long before she could see clearly to go on with the work which formed her only means of living, but at last she managed it. She worked her machine as fast as usual, she got through her usual amount of work; only, though there was nothing to show it, nothing to tell it, she was a changed woman. She had got up that morning with a hope at her heart, living in faith, she went to bed with a black despair. But sleep, the comfort of the sorrowful, took the poor outcast under her own protection; her weary head had no sooner touched the pillow than she had forgotten all her weariness, all her woes—ay, even the cruel blow dealt her by fate that very day.

She fell asleep, and dreamed she was far away from Caroline-street—far away from the sordid struggle for daily bread. She saw herself in a beautiful foreign country, dressed in silks and laces such as she had been wont to wear so long ago, and the one she best loved stood at her side, with a fair young girl on his arm.

"I leave her to you, Doris," said the voice she knew so well; "you'll guard our child and bring her to me later on."

The day had dawned when Miss Daw woke from her dream, the sun was shining into the miserable room; it touched the woman's cheek with a faint colour, it gave a golden radiance to the faded hair; and, still more, Heaven's sunshine gave another hope to the troubled heart—gave a new incentive to live on.

"I shall see him some day," thought Doris as she dressed herself—"some day, when no clouds can separate us; and, for the rest, it's like a message from the grave. I'll go and try. I've been there often and seen her face, but I never dared to speak to her before. It seemed like casting a shadow over her young life; but now he's told me it's different, and I'll go."

It was September, the loveliest of summer months when bright and warm—and this was an ideal September, when the days had all the warmth and gladness of July. All through that weary morning Miss Daw worked with redoubled speed; she hardly paused for dinner, but ate her slice of bread-and-dripping between the exigencies of the machine; then, at three o'clock, she stopped, folded away her work, and prepared to go out.

She tied on a shabby black bonnet, she fastened a rusty shawl—it said much for her that there was nothing revolting in her poverty; her dress was worn and threadbare, but there were no holes in it; her collar was white and spotless as soap could make it; and her complexion was clear and delicate—fragile from hard work and close confinement, but

not marred by dissipation or coarse from drink.

She looked the door of her room, put the key in her pocket, and started.

Miss Daw's usual walks were to the City, whence she fetched her work and whither she carried back when completed, but this afternoon she turned in quite a different direction. She walked on and on until the narrow streets and courts were left behind, and she stood in the broad, handsome thoroughfare we know as Piccadilly. London was well-nigh empty, there were no hindrances to her walk—no crowds of carriages, no gatherings of people—she walked on and on until her feet almost sank under her, and each step she took grew slower.

"This will never do," murmured the poor creature, "I shall be too late. I must make haste. I am doing his will—that ought to cheer me on."

And so, redoubling her efforts, banishing all thought of pain and weariness, the tired, patient, world-tossed wanderer walked on—on and on, without stopping until she reached the old Court suburb of Kensington.

(To be continued.)

MADE FOR EACH OTHER.

CHAPTER I.

RUTH'S CAPRICE.

It is a dull, misty day in October, and Ruth Wrayford is seated upon the white fur hearth-rug in the pink drawing-room of Wrayford Hall, gazing thoughtfully at the glowing coals burning redly in the polished grate.

Her attitude is not graceful, for she is nursing her knees, and thereby showing a good bit of ankle, in addition to a pair of very pretty feet, and she does not hear the door open, neither does she change her position until a servant says,—

"I thought Miss Wrayford and Miss Ruth were here, sir."

"And here I am," said the girl, quietly. "What is it, Brown?"

"Mr. Sidney Stanhope!" announced the servant, and a young man, who was very little above the middle height, walked into the room, and looked with undisguised surprise at the figure on the hearth-rug.

A more nervous girl than Ruth Wrayford, or one less wilful and capricious than she, would have blushed and scrambled to her feet; and even Ruth herself might possibly have done this if she had not resented the arrival of the visitor.

"Take Mr. Stanhope into the library and tell my aunt that he is there," was the order which she gave, without the least seeming discomposure; and as she did not turn her face towards the new comer, but still kept her eyes fixed on the fire, there was nothing for the servant to do but obey her, and no other course was left to Mr. Stanhope but to follow him without uttering a word.

When the door was closed after them, and she thought they were well on their way to the library, Ruth sprang to her feet, looked at herself in a glass, and, feeling angry at the sight of her own flushed face, gave her shoulders an impatient little shake, then walked slowly up to her own bedroom.

Here, safe from intrusion, she threw herself into a chair, and began to think of what she had done.

"He can't imagine that I expect him to fall in love with me after the way in which I received him!" she mused, with a satisfied smile; "but, at the same time, I might have been civil to him in my own house. I never thought of that; however, it can't be helped. Perhaps he will go away without trying to see me again. I almost wish he would, for I have quite made up my mind not to like him."

Then she waited and listened, expecting a servant with a request from her aunt that she would come to her; but no servant came,

neither did Miss Wrayford make her appearance, and the self-willed beauty was left to her own devices.

This was provoking, because her resources were not many. Moreover, her room felt chilly after leaving the glowing fire, and the daylight was fading fast, so that she could not have seen to read even if she had been disposed to try.

There are few things more irritating than being left to yourself when you know that you have done something calculated to excite indignation in the minds of those with whom you live; and Ruth Wrayford, after spending an hour in solitude, began to think herself an ill-used person, and at length determined that she would not put up with this kind of thing any longer.

She had lighted the candles some time previously, and on looking at her watch she saw that it was nearly five o'clock, the hour at which tea would be taken into the drawing-room.

"I thought I was thirsty," she said, with a yawn, "and I certainly am cold. I shall go down and have my tea, whether Mr. Stanhope is there or not. But what a fright I look in this gown! If it wasn't that aunt would think I had dressed myself on purpose to win his admiration, I'd put on something more becoming."

She looked at her own reflection in the glass, and she turned up her impatient little nose at the blue serge dress, which was, as she declared, plain enough to have suited a housemaid; but pride and perversity prevented her from changing it, though vanity and a secret and unavowed desire to make a conquest of the man she affected to avoid made her take out from her jewel-case a very handsome set of coral, consisting of necklet, earrings, and bracelet, which she proceeded to fasten on with evident satisfaction.

Then she brushed back her dark, golden-brown hair, and giving the curls which fringed her forehead a little shake, she felt on very good terms with herself, and went back to the drawing-room which she had vacated so hastily.

Nothing was changed, except that the lamps were lighted, and a small tea-table was drawn near the fire, by the side of which her aunt was seated.

"I was just going to send to tell you tea was ready," said Miss Wrayford, looking up from a magazine she was reading. "Have you been asleep?"

"No," replied Ruth, with a rapid glance round the room. "I haven't been asleep, though this place is dull enough to make one go to sleep altogether."

"I don't find it so," responded Miss Wrayford, with a quiet smile; "and I have seen more gaiety in my time than you are likely to see if you live twice as long; but unless you have resources in yourself, you will feel dull wherever you are."

"Goodness, Aunt Dora, you talk as though you were ninety!" exclaimed Ruth, impatiently. "I do wonder you give yourself the airs of an old woman, when you are scarcely middle-aged. I saw Mr. Bridgforth, the rector, quite stare at you the other day, when you talked as though you had had all the enjoyment out of life that you were ever likely to get—and well he might do so!"

"I think he would have much more cause for staring if I gave myself the airs and graces of a young girl," replied the elder lady, quietly, as she handed her niece a cup of tea; "but how pretty that coral looks, it suits you admirably!"

"Yes," assented Ruth; and she blushed because she knew her aunt would guess why she had put it on, and she felt a little vexed that she had adorned herself thus in vain.

But she would not ask what had become of the young man, whom she had been given to understand would be a desirable husband for her.

She was conscious of having behaved rudely, and she was a little sorry for her conduct,

because she would have liked to know what kind of man this Mr. Sidney Stanhope was, and curiosity was a strong element in the spoilt girl's character; but to ask any question about this individual would have been to give her aunt an opportunity of expressing her strong disapprobation of the way in which he had been received, and past experience had made Ruth careful to avoid the chance of rebuke.

So here she sat, sipping her tea and eating cake and muffins enough to make late dinner quite an unnecessary meal; while Miss Wrayford read her magazine and drank her tea in happy contentment, quite undisturbed by the half-suppressed restlessness of her troublesome niece.

"This is awful!" at length Ruth exclaimed, moving her chair from the table; "you haven't spoken a word to me since you poured out my first cup of tea, and you know I hate to sit silent!"

"Then, my dear, why don't you talk?" asked her relative, with a provoking smile; "or why don't you take a book and read as I do? It is much more interesting than trying to make conversation."

And Miss Wrayford became again absorbed in her magazine, while Ruth tried to amuse herself by teasing Dot, her aunt's tiny terrier.

But Dot was sleepy and disinclined for a romp, and when she found that peace was denied her she became snappish, and showed her teeth in a manner which clearly intimated that she could use them, and probably would do so to good purpose if not left alone.

At length the snapping and snarling became so annoying that Miss Wrayford looked up from her book, and exclaimed, impatiently,—

"Really, Ruth, I wish you would look for something to do, instead of making yourself a nuisance to everybody who comes near you; leave the dog alone! Here Dot, let us see if we can't find one quiet nook in this big house, we shall neither of us be sorry when we can get out of it;" and so saying, she gathered up her book and some coloured wool with which she was making a warm rug, and followed by her four-footed pet walked out of the room.

Ruth laughed, for it was not the first time that a scene like this had occurred, but when she was left alone she could not help bewailing her own unhappy lot.

"It's a wretched thing for a girl not to have father or mother, sisters or brothers!" she mused, fretfully. "Here I am, quite alone in the world, except for Aunt Dora and Uncle Ralph, whom my father appointed my guardians, and they are as bad as no relations at all; for aunt is always nursing her dogs or reading her books, and uncle spends most of his time when in my company in telling me what is due to my position. I am sick of my position, and if Arthur Ransom does ask me to marry him I'm not at all sure that I won't do it."

The bare possibility of such a contingency conjured up so many pictures in her mind, that her restlessness disappeared, and she seated herself in her aunt's low chair, took up one of the books which that lady had left behind, and, opening it at random, clasped her hands upon the open page, and then gave herself up to her favourite occupation of trying to read the future in the fire.

Her back was towards the door, and she sat so quietly that her uncle, Ralph Conniston, might be excused for mistaking her for the moment for her aunt, for he came into the room in something like a temper, as he said, angrily,—

"I do wish, Dora, that you would teach Ruth to behave with common decency. If she were a year or two younger I would send her to a good, strict school, and even as it is—"

He stopped, for Ruth was looking at him with a half-amused, half-indignant expression of countenance.

"As it is I should probably run away before I had been in the school four-and-twenty hours. But what have I done now, uncle?"

"What have you done now!" he repeated,

in a tone to which no words of mine can do justice. "You have behaved as I hope no daughter of mine will ever behave."

"As you are not married yet, uncle, it will be a good many years before any daughter of yours is likely to follow my bad example, whatever it may be," she replied, pertly. "But to what are you alluding? Is it my reception of Mr. Stanhope this afternoon that makes you so angry?"

"Reception, do you call it?" asked her uncle, ironically.

"Well, no. I am afraid my fault was in not receiving him; but the fact is, uncle, I was sitting on the rug in my favourite position, as though I were playing at hunt-the-slipper, when that stupid Brown announced Mr. Stanhope without any warning, and I had a sudden feeling that I should flounder on all fours if I attempted to spring to my feet, so I did not turn round, but told them to go to the library."

"Even then you might have followed them to the library, and have made some sort of apology," said Mr. Conniston, severely.

"Yes, I know I might have done so, and perhaps I ought to have done so, but I did not," was the half-laughing, half-apologetic reply. "The fact is I could not help thinking of what you said about Mr. Stanhope the other day, and I felt awkward, and—and—"

"Oh, you needn't apologize, and you may set your mind at rest with regard to Sidney Stanhope. He will never trouble you with his attentions; he would as soon think of going to the wigwag of a red Indian as of coming to Wrayford Hall for a wife, and small blame to him."

So saying Mr. Conniston closed the door, and went off to seek Dora Wrayford, who had, with himself, been left joint guardians of their by-no-means tractable niece.

"What a grumpy old bachelor uncle Ralph has become," muttered Ruth, kicking the hassock with her pretty feet, and addressing her friend the fire. "He grows worse and worse every day. I do wish some old frump would marry him and worry him back to his senses. The idea of making such a fuss about a trifle. I am sure if Mr. Stanhope likes to be offended he is welcome, nobody cares."

She did care, however, and she felt bitterly mortified when she recalled her uncle's contemptuous tone, for she knew that she had been rude to a stranger, and to be rude in her own house was a high crime and misdemeanour according to the code in which she had been brought up.

Nothing could be more dull than was the rest of that day to the impatient and high-spirited girl, for she and her aunt dined in state and almost in silence; and when Ruth inquired why her uncle Ralph had not stayed to dinner, Miss Wrayford replied briefly that he was too much annoyed to do so.

The remainder of the evening that was spent in the drawing-room was still more dull, for one lady read her book in dignified silence, while the other, smarting under the consciousness of having done a very foolish thing, fidgeted about the room, turned over albums with only a casual glance at their contents; opened portfolios, and spread the drawings and engravings over the tables, played snatches of tunes on the piano, and sang odd verses of songs, none of which she was patient enough to finish.

Miss Wrayford, seeming so indifferent, yet feeling this restless worry so keenly, bore with it as long as she could, but at last even she could put up with no more, and she rose to her feet, said "Good-night," and was leaving the room, when Ruth asked, daringly,—

"Was Mr. Stanhope very much annoyed with me to-day, aunt?"

"He didn't say so; but I can see that you are annoyed with yourself, and rightly so."

"Indeed, I am nothing of the kind," was the hasty reply. "Uncle had no business to talk about finding a suitable husband for me. It was quite enough to make me rude to anyone of whom he approved."

"I am sorry you think so, but neither he

nor I will attempt to influence you upon that subject in future; and if you choose to marry a sweep you must do so and take the consequences. You are quite old enough now to be able to understand what some of those consequences will be."

And Miss Wrayford, as she thus finished speaking, went off to her own room for the night.

"Which means that I may marry Arthur Ransom if I like," mused Ruth, turning round on the music-stool. "It's very kind of aunt and uncle to desert me in this fashion after having promised my father on his deathbed that they would take care of me as though I were their own child; and now, because I didn't turn round to speak to a man when he came into the room, aunt says I may marry a sweep. But I shan't do anything of the kind to please her; and, just for once in my life, I mean to have my own way."

The general opinion in the establishment was that Miss Ruth always had her own way, though there was sometimes a certain amount of affectionate opposition to it. Now all opposition was to be withdrawn, and the young lady was given to understand that her relations were disappointed in her, and were thoroughly weary of her whims and caprices; and henceforth they would take little or no interest in her proceedings.

But this was a kind of freedom which Miss Ruth did not at all like. Rebellion ceases to be rebellion when there are no laws to overstep and no one to defy, and Arthur Ransom, who was little better than an adventurer, had lost most of his attraction for her when to meet and speak to him ceased to be forbidden.

CHAPTER II.

HOW THEY MET AGAIN.

THE weather had undergone a swift and sudden change; the mercury had gone down to freezing point, and the sun shone with that cold brilliancy peculiar to a frosty day.

"I am going for a long walk," exclaimed Ruth, as she rose from the breakfast table. "I feel as though my veins were filled with electricity."

"Then you will excuse me from accompanying you?" said her aunt, with a smile. "If you have more electricity in you than usual I shall never be able to keep pace with you."

"No, I don't think you will," was the answer. "I'll take some of the dogs with me, the run will do them good," and so saying Ruth went to put on her walking garments.

She did not seem to be too warmly clad when she again made her appearance; and the blue cloth dress, though becoming enough, was thin and insufficient for so cold a morning.

Miss Wrayford quietly said so, adding that a sealackin was the proper thing to wear on such a day; but her niece laughed, as she replied that she should keep herself warm with walking; then she went off to the stables to call the dogs to go with her, a summons they were by no means loth to obey.

They made a very noisy party as they went along the riverbank within view of the windows of the Hall, and Miss Wrayford, looking at them, sighed, as she thought gloomily,—

"Poor Ruth! I sadly fear her high spirits, and her indifference to the wishes and feelings of others, will some day bring her to great trouble. I am more sorry than words can express that she should have so grossly offended Sidney Stanhope; for, besides the property, which there will now be a dispute over, he is just the kind of man to fascinate and manage her; but regrets are useless. He will marry Edith Moulton, and Ruth—perhaps Ruth will become an old maid like myself."

She smiled at this last idea, for she knew quite well that it was her own fault she had remained single so long; and she likewise felt pretty certain that if she lived much longer she would be prevailed upon to change her name.

Meanwhile, careless of everything but the enjoyment of the hour, Ruth Wrayford walked along the bank of the river, until the pathway branched off towards some woods, leaving the stream to pursue its course between low, marshy banks; for the country about Westwich is damp and flat, and few people would live in this part of the world from choice.

The dogs scampered hither and thither, their wild spirits becoming sobered down after a time; but their young mistress kept on at the same pace as when she started, until, having walked at least six miles from home, she thought, on consulting her watch, that it would be just as well to turn back. She was a little tired, however, so she sat down on the lower steps of a stile, and looked approvingly at a large pond, the surface of which, despite the sun's rays, was covered with a thin coating of ice.

"We shall have some skating soon," she thought; "but how keen the wind is, I feel quite shivery. It isn't wise to sit down after walking so fast; besides, I am getting hungry, and I shall be more hungry still before I reach home."

Then she rose to her feet, and was about to call her dogs, when an ill-looking man, whose close proximity gave her a sudden start, said in a whining tone,—

"Give a poor fellow a trifle, lady, I'm downright hungry I am, and there ain't no work to do this weather."

Ruth rarely gave to beggars, but there was something in this man's tone that frightened her, and she thrust her hand into her pocket and found that it was empty.

"I can't give you anything," she replied, "I have left my purse at home."

This was evidently true, but the man still continued his whine, coming closer to her meanwhile, and she exclaimed impatiently,—

"I tell you I have no money with me. I can't give you what I haven't got!"

"That watch of yours would get me a good dinner, lady," persisted the man, with a light in his eyes and a look on his face that there was no mistaking.

"I should think it would," she replied, angrily; then she put the whistle to her lips and gave one long shrill scream, for the ruffian had struck the silver toy from her hand, cutting her face in so doing, and had made a snatch at her watch.

"Hold your tongue!" he growled, with an oath; "or I'll do for you."

Instead of obeying him she shrieked wildly for help, and her dogs came rushing to the rescue, barking and snapping round the ruffian's legs, while Hero, the large mastiff, sprang at his throat.

It was the man's turn to defend himself now; but he was a strong powerful fellow, and was armed with a short thick bludgeon, with which he dealt blows right and left upon his canine assailants.

"Call your dogs off!" he threatened; "or it will be the worse for them and for you."

But Ruth, instead of doing as she was bidden, sprang upon the top of the stile, and looked anxiously about her. For a second or two she gazed in vain; then she saw a man in the distance to whom she called wildly, waving and wringing her hands meanwhile.

The stranger caught sight of her, and hastened to the spot, while she almost flew to meet him.

"A tramp has attacked me, and stolen my watch, and now he is killing my dogs," she cried, as the man, who was evidently a gentleman, approached her. "What shall I do?"

"The stranger clapped his cane, called to his own dog, and with an emphatic, 'I'll help you,' sprang past her and quickly reached the spot where the conflict was still continuing.

"Call off your dog!" shouted the man, in genuine terror; "do you want it to murder me?"

There seemed so much real cause for his apprehension that Ruth peremptorily called Hero, and the dog reluctantly came to her side.

All the man's courage deserted him when he

saw another man upon the spot, and he began in a whining tone to complain that the dogs had flown at him without provocation, and he "never meant no harm."

"My bleeding face and my watch there look like not meaning any harm; don't they?" said Ruth, indignantly, as she pointed to the watch that was lying on the ground, and took a handkerchief to staunch the blood that trickled from her own scratched face.

"Twice I me that did that," said the man, with unblinking effrontery; "it was them there dogs. You just see what they've done to me!" and he pointed to his torn clothes, and to one or two ugly bites which clearly showed that he had not come off unscathed.

The gentleman who had so timely come to the rescue, picked up the watch, and handed it to Ruth, while he asked,—

"What are we to do with this fellow?"

"I should like to give him in charge of the police," was the immediate reply.

"So should I. Unfortunately there are no police at hand, but I think that the dogs and I together can protect you until you come near your own house, and we can give information of what has happened to a policeman if we meet one;" and, turning to the tramp, he said, "If you value your liberty you will make yourself scarce in this neighbourhood," then he turned to accompany Ruth on her way.

The girl thanked him, and frankly accepted the protection of his company, and she told him how the man had attacked her, and graphically described the fright she was in.

"But I must not take you far out of your way," she said, at length; "for I have still a long distance to go."

"My time is my own," he replied, courteously; "and I think I had better see you to your own home. Where do you live?"

"On the outskirts of Westwiche!"

"Then it will not be out of my way, for I am myself staying in the town," he replied; but he did not volunteer any information about himself, neither did she tell him who she was, for she felt sure that he must know her, though she had never seen him before.

"Everybody in Westwiche knows me," she thought, with pardonable conceit, so she talked about her dogs and the weather, said she hoped there would be a hard frost so that they could have some skating, and remarked that she would be very glad when Christmas had come and gone, because there would be sure to be some nice parties when the new year had set in.

More than once as she thus rattled on with her girlish chatter Ruth glanced at her companion, and thought what a remarkably handsome man he was—rather a severe type of masculine beauty, perhaps, but at the same time particularly uncommon, and she wondered who he could be, and whether he was a resident in this part of the world.

She could not ask who he was, and he volunteered nothing about himself; indeed, as she afterwards remembered, he took no pains to make himself agreeable, but treated her just as he might have treated any other woman to whom he had been able to render some slight service.

They had come to the outskirts of Westwiche, and, as if by mutual consent, they paused at the meeting of two roads one of which led to the path that went by the river.

"Is this the road you would take if you were alone?" she asked, indicating the direction in which her own course lay.

"No," he replied.

"Then I won't trouble you to come any further with me," she said eagerly. "I am quite safe here, everybody knows me, and I am really very much obliged to you for coming so far."

She was quite sincere in what she said; she did not want to tax his good nature, but he fancied she wanted to get rid of him; and he replied politely, but coldly, that she had nothing for which to thank him, and lifting his hat pursued his own way.

The dogs looked wistfully after him as

though sorry to lose such a safe companion, and Hero seemed inclined to follow him; but Ruth called the animal after her, then walked on sharply towards her own home, for she was feeling hurt and vexed without exactly knowing why.

"I hope I didn't offend him," she thought. "I'm sure I didn't mean to do so, but I always seem to say things in the wrong way, or to do the wrong thing at the worst possible time. I wanted to find out his name and to give him an excuse for calling, if he felt inclined to do so. I wonder what made him take himself off in such a hurry; I quite expected he would say it was no trouble to go anywhere with me. He might have said so, I am sure; and even if it wasn't true, it would have been pleasant to have heard it."

So ran her thoughts until she had entered her own gates, and then telling a servant to look after the dogs, she at once joined her aunt, who had been somewhat anxiously expecting her.

"What is the matter with your face?" was the first question her relative addressed to her.

Ruth replied by describing her adventure. "Dear me, we must give information about it to the police; such a ruffian ought not to be at large," said Miss Wrayford, with energy. "And who was the person who so fortunately came to your rescue? Your uncle must call upon and thank him."

But Ruth was obliged to confess her ignorance on the point. The stranger had not volunteered his name, and she had not asked it; she described him minutely, however, and her aunt said quickly,—

"The only person whom I know that in the least approaches your description is Mr. Sidney Stanhope, but it is not at all likely that it was he."

"Mr. Stanhope!" ejaculated Ruth. "Is he at all like the gentleman I have described?"

"Yes, something like it; but I suppose he is ready and I am hungry, if you are not. I suppose your watch is quite spoiled?"

"I don't know, it has stopped," replied the girl, absently, as she handed her watch to her relative to examine.

She was thinking how mortifying it would be if her new acquaintance should prove to be the man to whom she had been so exceedingly rude.

Her aunt purposely avoided talking about Mr. Stanhope, and when she tried to find out what he had said after being sent away from the drawing-room so unceremoniously, she was answered so curtly that she was reluctantly obliged to drop the subject.

For the next few days she was kept a prisoner in the house by the rain, which fell incessantly; but then the weather changed again. The wind blew from the north-east, a sharp frost froze the springs, and covered river and lake with a coat of ice which soon became thick enough to be quite safe for skating.

"Now I shall have some fun!" exclaimed

Ruth, excitedly, when she heard that the ice on the Burr Pool was safe. "Now I shall have a glorious day, for if there is one thing more than another that I delight in is skating."

Her aunt smiled, and half envied the girl her capacity for keen enjoyment, for it seemed to the middle-aged woman as though nothing under the sun could so excite her with joyful anticipation as did this prospect of a few hours' skating affect her youthful niece.

But she forgot that the capacity for suffering in her niece was likewise far greater than her own, and that comparative trifles which wounded her self-esteem would reduce Ruth to a condition of abject misery painful to contemplate.

On the present occasion our heroine was in the very highest of spirits as they drove to the Burr Pool, and though the air was bitterly cold, he cheeks glowed with the fire of health.

She was very prettily dressed, too, her costume of brown velvet, trimmed with rich fur

being just relieved at the throat by a tie of pale blue, while some small feathers of the same colour appeared among the trimming of her brown hat.

On arriving at the edge of the pool they alighted, and were greeted by several friends who had come either to take part in the sport, or, like Miss Wrayford, to look on from a safe point of observation.

Ruth was soon on the ice skimming along like a bird, moving without the least apparent effort, her hands wrapped cosily in her muff, and looking as though the ice were her natural home.

She could not be here long without being observed, and many were the envious and admiring glances which followed her in her erratic course over the ice, but she was all unconscious of it.

The mere pleasure of existence was great enough under present conditions to drive from her mind for the time all thoughts of vanity.

Suddenly in her swift course she came in collision with a gentleman whose head was turned one way while he was going another, and but for clutched hold of each other and going a few yards together the couple must have fallen.

These few yards brought them close to the bank just at the spot where Miss Wrayford was standing, and she exclaimed anxiously,—

"You narrowly escaped a fall, Ruth, and you, Mr. Stanhope, were not looking which way you were going."

"Mr. Stanhope!" repeated Ruth, and looking at the individual in question she saw that it was the same who had so opportunely come to her rescue when attacked by the tramp.

Before she could speak, however, he had lifted his hat, and hastily saying,—

"Yes, I beg your pardon," went off as

swiftly as his skates would take him.

"He is quite offended with me," said Ruth, following him with her eyes; "and it was he who saved me from that horrid man the other day. What am I to do?"

"Of course he is offended," was the severe reply. "Your conduct was utterly unpardonable and most un ladylike."

So saying Miss Wrayford turned away, leaving her niece to chew the bitter cud of reflection at her leisure.

Ruth was a creature of impulse; she had done one foolish thing by acting on the spur of the moment, and now she did another which was calculated to bring her a far greater amount of mortification.

Without saying a word of her intention she skated after Stanhope, but the surface of the pool had become pretty well crowded by this time, and through having to make her way with some caution she lost sight of the object of her search, and after looking about for him for a little time in vain she thought he must have left the ice.

This was provoking, because she had meant to apologise, but as he was not to be found she thought she would write him a little note.

She was just returning to her aunt when she caught sight of her hero standing near some ladies, and without a moment's hesitation she went straight up to him and held out her hand, saying,—

"I want to apologise for my rudeness to you the other day, Mr. Stanhope. I really did not think of what I was doing at the moment, and I hope you will forgive me."

She smiled so sweetly, and she looked so frank and so winning, that it was impossible to doubt her sincerity or to fail to admire her straightforwardness, and it was perhaps because he admired her so much that Stanhope said coldly,—

"There was no necessity for apology, Miss Wrayford. I hope you have recovered from the fright that tramp gave you."

"Yes, thank you," she replied, chilled by his manner, yet determined not to show her vexation.

Then, recognising the girl to whom Stan-

hope had been speaking, and feeling awkward with the consciousness that her company was unwelcome, she said, with more emphasis than she was herself aware of,—

"What, you here, Edith?"

"And why should I not be here?" asked Miss Moulton, the hectic colour on her cheeks becoming of a brighter hue.

"I was only thinking of your health," replied Ruth, apologetically. "I enjoy this weather immensely, but the wind is very keen and cold for one who is delicate like you."

"Thank you for your solicitude, but I am no more delicate than you are!" was the angry response.

Ruth felt that she had made another blunder, and she saw that her apology had produced but very little effect upon Sidney Stanhope, for he seemed as coldly polite and as unbending as ever; so to cover her retreat as gracefully as possible, she said,—

"You must be stronger than I if you can bear to stand still in this sharp wind any longer, and my aunt is waiting for me, so I must say good-bye."

And with a nod to Edith and her companion she skated to the part of the bank upon which she saw her relative.

"I am quite ready to go home," she said, as she allowed a servant to take off her skates. "I suppose you have had enough of it, auntie?"

"Yes, quite enough," was the reply.

Then they entered their carriage, and were driven homeward.

"Has Mr. Stanhope known the Moultons for any length of time?" she asked, as they rode along.

"I don't know," was the studied answer; "but he and Edith are engaged to be married."

"To be married!" echoed the girl. "Then that helps to explain."

She paused. The news was a shock to her, but womanly pride made her try to hide her feelings, and to her intense relief her aunt did not pursue the subject.

Perhaps the elder woman saw the condition of the girl's mind more clearly than her niece suspected.

As for Ruth, she was very quiet for the rest of the day. If she was mortified, she hid her feelings completely; knowing full well that she had only herself to blame for the caprice that had driven Sidney Stanhope from her door.

(To be continued.)

FOUND WANTING.

CHAPTER V.

CHRISTINE, the dearly-loved sister, whose high soul would have scorned the mere thought of such deadly breach of faith, and lost its perfect belief in the man to whom the thought came! Christine, whom Pelham loved more truly—more nobly, than bewitching Maddie, of whose reproach he stood in fear—whose trust he dreaded to lose—what would she say if she knew?

Through a long, hot, restless night this fear kept recurring. He pictured the look in the great grey eyes when she heard that he had won another man's betrothed wife—that he had made chaos of another man's life to give peace to his own!

He tossed from side to side, writhing at the vision called up. She seemed to him standing there in the moonlight, such scorn in the slender shape—such sorrowful pity on the pale young face.

Turn as he would he saw her, as if the pure, upright soul struggled invisibly with him. But the prize to be given up—the love of his life—for intangible faith! His heart cried out wildly. He loved her! How could he yield her? She loved him! How could he see her suffer as wife to a man she had never loved? You have tempted her, a weaker soul than yours, the invisible soul answered. You have

lured her away; she loves you, but the love was taught by you! A man to so foully wrong his fellow man—the bearer of an old name to lower it so irretrievably. Give up life; give up love for honour and truth!

"I cannot!" cried Clifford, aloud, starting up. "Thank Heaven the day has come! Was Christine there, in that ghastly moonlight?"

He shuddered from head to foot. Then he began to dress hastily. Christine must never know the truth; there must be this lifelong secret between them—this barrier always in sight.

Be it so. It need make no difference in their love, he argued, passion shivering to atoms the power of the earlier love.

What did he owe to Albert Delmar, besides, that he should destroy his own happiness to preserve his? Had he not always been his rival? And he had gone too far now to draw back. Last night he had almost told Maddie he loved her; she must know it. His honour was pledged.

But that word made him change colour though he was alone. Honour for him lay in a groove—such honour as remained to him. So ready to fall back on a plea he would have none of. Honour! how, in pleading its excuse, he trailed it deep in the dust! Honour to a woman and none to a man! And he called that love which could sear the soul of the woman he loved.

By the time he was dressed he had argued himself into the belief that he owed it to Maddie not to draw back. Christine herself must think so.

"She will never know, though," he said, hastily, and went down to breakfast.

Maddie, too, had not been free from compunction. She had slept the night through, however; but a pang crossed her as on her plate at breakfast she saw the well-known handwriting and the Scottish postmark.

She frowned and would not open the letter at once. She spoke very little—she, usually a chatterbox! She thought of Strathallie and that old-fashioned, old world Daneswood. How gloomy they would be! She wished she had asked him about that Miss Meredith. She dared say there was someone to flirt with at Strathallie. What a pity he had been so wild!

Then she read her letter languidly, with neither smile nor sparkle.

It was characteristic of Delmar that not a word was said as to her promise to fix the date of their marriage. She had said she would write, and she would, without any need for urging.

Some slight complaint there was as to the brevity of her letters, but you could have fancied him smiling while he made it. So there seemed nothing to make the girl look vexed.

Mrs. Elmhurst watched her quietly. She saw how restless she was, but she went about her own duties and left the unstable soul to toss as it might.

That day passed, however, without Clifford making his appearance. Perhaps there was some design in this. After what he had said the girl would expect him—miss him—then fancy he had left for good, and torment herself. All of which Maddie did. The breathing time which a stronger heart would have laid hold of, to know itself and regain the lost position, Maddie occupied in fretful conjectures as to the sort of life Albert really led; in disloyal dwelling on his hundred faults; in feeble wonderings whether she really loved him!

Not once did she ask if he loved her, perhaps because the question would have seemed superfluous; not once did she think of the matchless faith he held in her, of the just claim he had on her to think a little of his happiness! Further and further he went from her thoughts and heart, and the gap was filled up with the image of Pelham Clifford.

She was pale, and listless, and anxious by the third day; so that when, wandering in the garden, she heard a click on the latch and

looking up saw Clifford enter the garden, the change in her was marvellous. The blood rushed over her face, her lips half opened, her eyes all aglow. Had Albert ever received such greeting as this?

Clifford clasped her hands closely, a sort of fierce joy in the pressure of his fingers.

"You are glad to see me?" he asked, softly.

"Oh! why did you stay away?" the girl whispered, glancing up, half reproachfully.

Was there need of any explanation? Had she not surrendered the whole position in those words, so sweet to one, so cruel to the other? Into that very path where Albert Delmar had won her confession of love, had afterwards vowed his unalterable trust in her, this new lover led her. She wavered then, and would have hung back.

But the strong hand drew her on. Always led, always leaning, she made no further resistance, and Albert's impassioned pleading was forgotten, as the avowal of a love that seemed to her as burning, fell on her ear.

"After what I said," Clifford began, still keeping his hold of her, "I have no right to hold back. You may blame me, call me false, a traitor! I cannot help it! I loved you from the minute I first saw you. Love such as mine knows, can brook no other demands, it sweeps all before it. So that you give me your love I am powerless to resist my own, and powerless to listen to any other pleas. Reproach me if you will, Maddie—do all but say your heart is given away—that I am too late—that the souls that were meant for each other must be parted by a cruel promise; that I must stand by and see your life flung away on a man you have ceased to love—who will not value it as I do—"

"But Albert," said the girl, struggling with her sobs, "he trusts me—oh! what will he say? And he loves me!"

"Loves you!" repeated Clifford, passing one arm round the yielding form—"perhaps; but do you love him or me?"

He was tempting her so, and her own heart was tempting her too. Had she ever loved Albert?—had she felt when he asked that question as she felt now? Was it true that a mistaken promise should not part two kindred souls? Closer she felt his arm drawn round her, and she flung down and trampled on the souls of the two men who loved her.

"You!" she whispered, and heard no echo of another voice in the deep, glad tones of this, felt no pressure of other lips as these met hers in the kiss that should have blistered them. She was happy as the Maddies of this world can be; they have no unsatisfied needs, and they see not the hands stretched out in direst need. Her heart was filled, no matter whose hungered. She was like the bright bird who lives in the sun; there are no shadows for him.

"You will never reproach me?" were Clifford's first coherent words.

"Reproach you!"

"Ah, Maddie! after all, only such love as mine can excuse me—only such as yours pardon me."

"Albert, you mean?" she said, under her breath. "But if I do not love him—"

"There it is, dearest. Your lives—both of them—would be flung away. Now, you find your true life; and he, surely, if he really loves you, would not seek to hold you to a promise you no longer wish to keep?"

"No—no—I daresay not," said Maddie, but trembled. It was very sweet all this—to love and be loved; but the ugly part that remained to be done—that only she could do!

"I am so afraid of him!" she said, clinging to this new protector.

"But listen, dear; what can he, what will he wish to do! If he has any honour he will not try to claim a reluctant bride. *Omnis vincit amor*, Maddie; and the hearts that were meant for each other must meet; they cannot be parted by an alien tie. I grant he may, perhaps, consider I have wronged him. Well, I can give the best, the irresistible reason—"

yourself. Who could know you, and not yield to you life—and all things?"

"Save honour!" flashed into his mind, as if the Christine of last night had said it. No such answer would ever come from these lips that smiled at him.

"You had mistaken yourself!" said Clifford; "a common enough error, but not always retrievable as it happily is now. He will see it in time; he will be glad for you to be happy. You would never have been happy with him!"

"Oh! no," said Maddie, shuddering.

"And I have the prior claim—the supreme claim of love—so we do him no wrong. Put away all fear, my Maddie!"

"I have!" said the girl, and she looked it—cloudless was her face. "I am sorry for him, or was; but it is for the best, isn't it? It is kinder to him, you are quite sure?"

"Quite sure!"

"And you would not say so if you were not!" said she, confidently. "It was a mistake. I don't think I ever loved him as—"

"Finish it, Maddie!" said Clifford, half-laughing as she turned her head aside. The next instant her brown eyes met his, with a look which saved the need of words. They paced up and down the long walk, talking mostly. It is another sort of love than theirs that not only needs silence, but speaks them more fully. It was lovers' talk, of course, with nothing in it outsiders would care to hear, but a great deal to them. Maddie, too, asked questions about her future sister-in-law, of whom she had already heard; and Clifford, while satisfying her curiosity, did not think it yet necessary to tell her that Christine must never know of that broken engagement.

That evening Maddie told her aunt of what had passed. Mrs. Elmhurst listened to her with a mixture of feelings. It was terribly awkward, and yet she was relieved. What would Knights Milwood say! but she immediately recalled that Maddie's engagement was not known save to some relatives at a distance. What, worst of all, what would Albert Delmar say?

Maddie knelt down before her.

"Auntie!" said she, "are you angry?"

"Angry with you, my dearest child!" said Mrs. Elmhurst, kissing her fondly; "not the least. I never quite liked that engagement—I may say now—nor Albert himself. I don't think he is all he ought to be. And you were not suited for each other. No! I like this better. But what will Albert say? I cannot bear to face it!"

"Oh! auntie, don't desert me! I can't marry him if I don't love him. He would be miserable, and so should I! Oh! what shall I do? I promised to write and tell him the very day we would be married; and if I write about this he will come rushing back. I know he will. And he is so fiery, if he meets Pelham something will happen!"

"Hush! dear, don't cry. It is very unfortunate—very. Still it is best—much best. Albert will not break his heart; I don't fancy he has much heart."

"Auntie!" said the girl, eagerly, half piqued, half remorseful, "he was—he is fond of me. He will be unhappy, I know!"

"Yes, for a time; but men get over these things, Maddie—men like he, at least. He has other pursuits—his writing, his own pleasures; no woman is all-in-all to a man like that. Don't write just yet, dear. I must speak to your uncle and Mr. Clifford first. There, dear, dry your tears. You are happy, and that is enough."

Maddie's tears never came from very deep wells. She danced away, glad that the onus of future procedure was off her shoulders.

Mr. Elmhurst, to whom on retiring at night, his wife confided the position of affairs, did not take it quite so coolly. He felt as a man for a man, and asked, indignantly,—

"This seems all very odd. There's Delmar to be thought of."

"Maddie would be wretched with him."

"She didn't think so three weeks ago."

"It was a mistake altogether; she never really cared for Albert, and we should not have allowed the engagement."

"That's all nonsense; we did allow it."

"Will you please listen? Maddie can't marry him now. Mr. Clifford will make her much happier. And that being so, nothing must be said to Albert until she is married."

"Good heavens, Lucy! Why he'll be here in a fortnight!"

"He'll do nothing of the sort. If we go writing to him and all that he'll think he can stop it and come back; and there'll be a scene, and worse. I wouldn't have Clifford and he meet for worlds. You must see that."

"Of course I do. But I say it need never have happened. I thought Maddie was wrapped up in him. Fickle as water, girls! No depending on them! I am angry with her; she's disappointed me. It's a deuce of a shame to treat a fellow so—and he away!"

Mrs. Elmhurst did not check these reflections; she looked on them as a safety valve. She was quite confident that no word would reach Delmar till she chose, and was not afraid of more than a little coldness to the girl for a day or two. She and Maddie had always ruled him; she by superior energy and the hundred manoeuvres some wives learn; Maddie by simple witchery. He would be no trouble. He might grumble—and he did; but Mrs. Elmhurst was not sensitive, and cared little for a show of rebellion when the substance was wanting. Just when she chose—she and Clifford—Albert Delmar should know that the man he had introduced to his betrothed's home had supplanted him.

CHAPTER VI.

STRATHALIE was a wild enough place. It made its inhabitants feel as if civilization had been abandoned when they crossed that towering mountain range that shut out all the world beyond.

The nearest town of any sort was five miles off, and it was really little more than a village. No railway came within twenty miles; and carriages had to be abandoned a mile from the house, because a narrow pass was the only mode of access.

Added to this, in snow time or heavy rains this pass was inaccessible, because the mountain stream overflowed it, and swollen to twice its size, tumbled roaring and foaming down the steep gorge.

In these cases the inmates of Strathalie were completely shut in. Unless they chose to lose their lives there was no possibility of getting to the lower country.

The first two weeks Delmar got on very well. The weather was fine and warm, and he had plenty to occupy him.

The business in hand proved to be more elaborate and tedious than he had expected, but he meant to get through it by the appointed time. The house was in fair order, and wanted no great alterations to fit it for Maddie's reception.

Out-of-doors, in this mountain district—to which the Highland side of him had a natural affinity—there was plenty of enjoyment; and though he was away from Maddie, all he was doing and planning was for her, so that she seemed with him in spirit.

And then her letters. Nothing stayed him from going or sending to the post-office in the little town. At first they were long and chatty; and if not very well written, in a literary point of view, what did that matter? They were written with her own hand, they spoke of all her doings. Delmar, *litterateur* though he was, hardly noticed whether the style were without blemish.

But afterwards they became shorter, frequently finishing off with "I've no time for more," or "We are going out, and I'll send this at once." Besides which there was a nameless constraint in them that his keen sense noticed directly.

He had not an atom of suspicion though. The shortness he put down to her having much

to do, and he knew she was not ready with, or fond of her pen. The constraint he did not think much about, relegating it to the region of things indifferent.

He did wonder a little she still delayed to fulfil her promise, and as the third week opened, and still nothing definite, he began to think about it.

That third week opened with rain. It woke him in the early dawn splashing and beating against the window, and his thoughts sprang to the stream he had crossed yesterday, sunny and tranquil.

When he went downstairs a dull, grey mist, throwing off steaming vapours, met his eyes as he stood at the hall door. It looked disheartening.

"Donald," said he, to an old servant, who was passing, "it isn't raining so heavily now as it was this morning. How long is it before that stream is impassable?"

"Not more than two days' hard rain, sir," answered the old man; "but we haven't done with the rain yet. We're in for it now, I think."

"The deuce take it!" muttered the young master, impatiently, and went back to the breakfast-room.

All that day he was busy. The next, when he expected there would be a letter from Maddie, he told Donald he was going to Invermure, the post town.

"I wish you wouldn't sir," said the old man, anxiously. (He had been in the family since Albert's mother was a girl.) "You'll be able, perhaps, to wade the stream going, but you mayn't coming back. It'll be impassable to-morrow."

"All the more reason to go to-day," said Delmar, preparing to wrap round him his tartan. For the air was raw. "A wetting won't hurt me, Donald!"

"But, Mr. Albert, what if you can't get back?"

"I'll get back!" said the other, with a determined, almost defiant flash in his blue eyes. He would have bent the elements to his will if he could. He could not, so he did the next best thing—disregarded them.

A wetting he got, for which he cared nothing. He reached the post-office, and in answer to his question the man handed him four letters.

Delmar went out into the drizzling, damp mist with heart beating a little quicker as he turned over the letters and glanced at each envelope. One from his Edinburgh lawyer, one from a London friend, one with a German post-mark, the other—he crushed it in his vexation and disappointment—only from the housekeeper at Daneswood.

No letter from Maddie! And her last was only a half sheet. Was she ill? Should he go back to the post-office and write a line or telegraph, since to-morrow neither might be possible? He hesitated, turned back, then stopped again.

"No! I am a fool! I can't expect her to write so often. She may have just misread a post; and if I send she will think I am annoyed. She is sure to write soon; and, anyhow, in ten days I shall see her."

He went on resolutely. No, not annoyed, but more disappointed than he liked to acknowledge.

His ardent temperament was not always a blessing to him; it let him take nothing lightly. He had looked forward to finding a letter with an intensity of expectation, and the disappointment was proportionately keen.

The way home seemed dull and long. The mist, thicker on the mountains, was depressing; the stream was more swollen, but he crossed it—though with some difficulty, and not a little risk; and the risk was not worth the candle.

The rain came down in a torrent just as he reached the level ground, and he looked back to the heights behind him, listening to the moan of the stream.

Rain, rain all that night and the next day; not light rain, but coming down as if the

heavens were opened. Day and night they heard at Strathallie the roar of the waters as they hurried down the crags and, meeting other rushing streams, turned the narrow path and the roadway below into a small sea.

Delmar chafed with all the uncontrolled impatience of his fiery nature. Inaction and uncertainty, the being fettered against his will, were all like stretching him on the rack. He was powerless; neither gold nor intrepidity were of the slightest use. For it was not merely a risk, it was certainty of death; and he had a reasonable value for his life—especially now. Life was just becoming fairer than it had ever been; he was just bracing himself to begin anew—to retrieve past errors. There was Maddie to live for—to strive for.

"You'll have long to wait for your letter, sir," said old Donald, one day. "But it'll be all the better when you get it."

Delmar smiled, and the proud, fair face softened. That letter, what would it not hold for him? He thought of it as he turned his gaze dreamily to the fire, beside which he sat, idly stroking the staghound at his feet. He seemed to see his darling beside that hearth—his and hers—sitting there in her dainty beauty, making the old room bright and a home. Oh, perhaps, she would sit at that piano, and sing in the clear, true tones that lulled his restless heart. Or, sweeter still, she would come to him in the gleaming and nestle in his arms, and they would be quite silent—for what need to talk when they know each other's thoughts? He saw it all in the sparkling wood fire, and he forgot that Donald was still in the room, but Donald watched him.

The old man remembered afterwards his young master's face as it looked that evening—the last of the heavy rains.

There was no rain the next day, the first of another week, only the mist still hanging over the mountains. No child, promised some rare treat, could have watched the weather with more eagerness than Delmar did. He laughed at himself while he acknowledged the fact.

And, lo! and behold, one morning rose so fair that he hurried through what work he had to finish ready for his solicitor to-morrow, and towards the afternoon was away over the mountains to Invermere.

Donald had remonstrated—it was still dangerous, he said; but his master refused all counsel, and, as he went off, the old man stood watching the lithe form stepping along with the true Highland spring.

"Ah! well," said he, shutting the hall door, "at his age some danger is only fun if it's for a lassie's sake."

Delmar scrambled up slippery crags, and through level ground, swimming in water, in happy carelessness of hardship or danger. At the post-office he had to wait while some others were being attended to, but as the clerk caught sight of him he called out,—

"I've some letters for you, sir—here they are—been here some four or five days."

"Thanks," said Delmar, taking them; "the hills were impassable till to-day. Good-night!"

He went out into the little street. The daylight would not fade for hours yet, and the afternoon was fair and warm. There were many people in the one street, tempted out by the welcome change, and to most of them the young English master of Strathallie was known by sight. They wondered how he had got over the pass; and one, who claimed some acquaintance, warned him to get back before the evening mist came up.

Up in the mountains again, and he had kissed Maddie's letter more than once before he broke it open. Five days to have been lying in that wretched little office—five days—and he to be hungering for a line—a word! And, now he had got it, how short it was, and there was no superscription. It began abruptly,—

"I don't know whether you will ever forgive me—"

Then came some words crossed, and the

writing was shaky, as if written with a trembling hand.

Delmar hardly read the rest—his eye took in every sentence without deliberate act; then he stopped—he had been walking slowly—laid one hand on a huge boulder near him, and pressed the other over his forehead. He was dizzy—stupid—he had made some mistake—this was not Maddie's letter; and yet it had looked like her writing. But it couldn't be; and the signature was not hers—she would not put "Madeline Clifford," she always wrote "Your own Maddie."

He dropped his hand, still keeping the other grasping—not merely touching—the grey boulder, and looked again at the letter, or tried to; but the lines swam, and grew first black and then all colours, till he could not see them. He could not tell how some words got into his head, but he heard them, and then they grew large before his eyes, all blood-red,—

"You said if my own lips said it or my hand wrote it you would believe me false—this is my hand."

They maddened him—those haunting words—where were they? Not in that letter—that letter he had braved danger to get—that he had kissed in passionate joy? It was folly—a dream. The sun might not set to-night—but Maddie wrote such words!

Twice he tried to read again—to make sure it was a mistake—never that it was true, because that was impossible. Each time his hand fell nervously, as if all his young strength had left him. It was by a fiercely resolute effort that he roused himself at last. Then he read again—once very slowly—a second time, turning the page backwards and forwards as if to gather some sense that had escaped him before—a third time, till the cruel words were burnt into his brain and his heart, and life itself stood still. The man was crushed, and showed it by his action, for he flung his arms over the cold rock, and his head sank down on them, and his breath came in long, deep gasps, that were almost sobs.

"It is all for the best," she had written, trying, in her puerile fashion, to give comfort because to her no anguish was comfortable. "We should never have been happy. It was a mistake, and he said it was better to know it now than too late. Don't be very angry with me, Albert—I couldn't help it when he showed he loved me."

All for the best—and a man lies beaten down and prone, and his hopes have died out, and the blackness of darkness gathers around him! He is alone—the terrible loneliness of an agony none can share, and he would suffer not even a mother's hand to soothe. Is it all for the best—this wreck of a soul? For as the time wears on so surely a revolution has gone on within that still form. His love is not killed even by a treachery so deep—no, it is less her treachery than that of the man he has brought into her home, who has tempted her, lured her, bewildered her; and the anguish that has absorbed all his powers of suffering is gathering up into that passion that with his mother's wild race is a creed. To sit down under a wrong, to weep and not strike, is in itself a foul wrong and a deep disgrace. He started up with a sudden movement—his blue eyes were gleaming; his hands, that had trembled and clung to support, clenched, his slight form erect and instinct with the full pulse of life.

"Heaven forget me!" he said, with a terrible emphasis; "if I forget to avenge this wrong. Always my enemy, I have scorned him till now. Now I am his enemy. For the best, is it?" with a bitter laugh. "Well, I have given up for ever faith, and trust, and love. I will never give trust again—there is no truth anywhere—no, not even in Heaven!"

The night was falling—how long he must have been lying there; but he gathered himself up with up with a vague feeling that he must get back somehow. His vigour seemed suspended; he walked falteringly, now and then half stumbling. He went recklessly through

the waters that lay between him and Strathallie blindly and by instinct doing the right things to lessen the danger; with a numb thought once that it would not much matter if he went under. Then he saw the lights gleaming from the windows far down in the valley; they came nearer and grew clearer, and then he heard the staghound bay as his hand was on the door.

Out from the mist and the dreary night, into the warmth and the light of fire, and the hound was prancing round him and licking his hand; but Delmar gave no answering scream. He put the dog aside, not touched by its affection when none other remained. The shock that had exhausted his power to receive another, the desperation, the passion that was filling his heart and searing his soul—left no room for the softening of grief; the unquenchable sense of wrong swallowed and overborne—to-night, at least—the sense of loss.

To-night he was wild and restless with pain, unable to keep still for a minute, fighting with his own impotence, burning to have in his grasp the man who had done him such dastardly wrong, and wring the life from him. To-night there was no tender thought of the past, no pity or mercy. Through the long hours he paced up and down and across; and the fire went down, and the cold of the dawn crept in, and he knew of neither; while the hound lay crouched on the hearth and whined pitifully. Was it all for the best?

CHAPTER VII.

"WHAT an industrious girl you are!" said Mrs. Tom Lonsdale, flitting in from the garden through the drawing-room window. "I have just been down to the gate, and I can't see that wretch of a postman anywhere!"

"What a misfortune!" said the young lady addressed, in a low voice. "I was working with exquisite taste and skill at some embroidery, and was seated in a low chair near the window, with her lap full of various shaded silks. Her dress was of blue and white, belted at the slender waist, and finished at the throat by a high ruffling of lace. She could not have chosen a better mode of bringing out all the good looks she was possessed of—not the least of which was the grace of the well-shaped head, with its clustering wealth of curly chestnut hair, and the rich tints of a clear dark skin. She had another beauty, too; for as she answered Mrs. Tom she lifted a pair of gray eyes, oval-shaped, with transparent lids and long, thick lashes, that were simply magnificent. She was a mere girl, not more than eighteen, but the face was full of character, the chin rounded and firm, the lips habitually closed. It was a cultured, high-bred face—happy-looking, too, as if few clouds had as yet obscured her sunshine. Mrs. Lonsdale, a rather pretty little brunette, stood looking at her with honest admiration.

She was wont to openly wish she had, if not Christine Clifford's loveliness, at least her fascination.

"It is, indeed!" said she, standing poised on the low sill. "Tom wrote days ago, and he has actually not answered yet. I hope he'll come. I've never seen him, nor have you, have you?"

"No; Pelham has mentioned him occasionally in his letters, but I fancy they were not much together. You see I have been abroad at school; so I really don't know all ins and outs!"

"And now I've got you for as long as I choose," said Mrs. Tom, delightedly. "You were the only thing that made me sorry to leave our Dresden school and come home! It's lucky Tom took this place for the Long Vacation."

"Lucky! He took it for you, because you are so fond of the country."

"So he did, dear boy. But then our first year isn't over yet, so he'll do anything. I was going to say it was lucky, because it enabled me to ask you here. It was most kind of your brother to get married just now,

and release you. How long will they be away?"

"I don't know," said Christine, completing a rose that looked as if it must have scent. "I think about two months. They are wandering about here and there, but I don't know whether my new sister likes that."

"Why not? I should think it charming!"

"She does not strike me as the sort of person to appreciate it."

"No? Well now, how do you like her, and what sort of a wedding was it? I haven't heard a word, and I'm dying to be enlightened," said Kate, drawing up a chair beside her sometime school chum and now dearest friend. "Christine, my love, you really do work like an artist. Those colours—and the shading! It is enough to make me hate you!"

"Oh, don't, pray," said the girl, laughing; "for I have only you and my dear old Pel to care about; so I can't afford to lose you. The wedding was a very pretty one."

"And the bride?"

"Very pretty, too."

"What else?"

Christine looked up, and Kate laughed outright.

"My dear child (how absurd that sounds from me who am only a few years your senior!), but you look so innocent and puzzled. When are you going to be less reserved? I want to know how you like her, and if you are pleased with the match, and think they'll be happy, and soon."

"Did you think I did not like her, because I said she wouldn't appreciate travelling about?" asked Christine. "I do like her; she is a dear little affectionate thing, and just the sort of girl I always thought Pel would fancy. She seems fond of him, and I am certain he is very fond of her. Love on both sides gives as great a chance of happiness as is possible; at least it minimises the risk of marriage. Are you answered?"

"No. Do you know that there is some doubt in your tone, Christine?"

"I did not know that. I suppose," said the girl, slowly drawing her needle through the silk. "It is because there is a doubt in my own mind—no, not doubt. I think they will be very happy."

"But you don't quite like it?" said Mrs. Tom, laying her hand on her friend's.

"Yes, I do, very much!" She paused half a minute, then said, bending her head lower, while the work dropped in her lap,—"Kate, I enjoyed my visit to London, and my role of bridesmaid immensely. It was a quiet wedding, as I told you, because Felham wanted to get abroad quickly, and there wasn't much time; but I prefer that to a fuss about such a solemn thing. The Elmhursts, too, were very kind and friendly to me, and when I saw Maddie I couldn't help kissing her. That was rare for me to make the first advance, so I must have been taken with her. And I was. I think we shall get on capitally when they come back, and I am with them, as they both insist I shall be. But don't you know there are some people you like very much, are even fond of, and yet you have no confidence in them, and you never can get beyond affection? There is no wear in Maddie."

"My dear, what do you mean?"

"You understand me, Kate. Don't think me unkind, but it seems to me that one could get tired of her soon in intimate association. For instance, Felham is deeply in love with her now, but I don't think he will be after some years of married life."

Here the great grey eyes filled with sudden tears. Little Kate, quick to sympathise, put out her hand again with an earnest,—"Dear Christine!"

"I am stupid," said the girl, brushing away the unbidden tears; "but you understand, Kate, what Pel is to me. Our parents died in India when we were children, and we were left to my uncle and aunt. They were very kind and good, but they had their own children—we could not be first, so Pel and I became all in all to each other. We have few

relations—none we are intimate with—the ties were so broken when my father went to India; so we stand alone, as it were. I am not jealous of Maddie. I was so pleased when he wrote to me to come home to be her bridesmaid;—no wife, however much he loved her, would make Pel's love for me cool."

"You jealous, Christine! Did you imagine I thought such a thing? Perhaps marriage may sober her."

"It isn't sobbing she wants—the fault is intrinsic. You are quite as gay and light-hearted, but your husband will be just as fond of you twenty years hence as he is now."

"I hope so—dear old Tom!"

Christine flashed a bright look at the little wife, and took up her work again, with the more cheerful remark,—"I ought not to be unhappy, though, when they are so happy. It is very faint-hearted, and I am sorry I have troubled you. You made me speak."

"I am glad I did. You are only a bit of a girl, and why should you brood and keep things to yourself? It will never go beyond me. Oh—there is the postman—I see him coming up."

She rushed off and presently rushed back again like a whirlwind, waving aloft a letter, which she proceeded to open.

"Tom told me I might if Mr. Delmar wrote while he was away. Here it is:—'Dear Lonsdale's—short and very sweet, for he's coming,' said she, triumphantly. 'Now I shall see this wonderful hair Tinted! and you will have some change of companionship. Don't fall in love with this Mr. Delmar. He's very handsome and very clever—and that's what would attract you; you very odd girl. It's rather a funny resumption of their friendship, isn't it? They've never met since they were at college.'"

"Well, Mr. Lonsdale has been grinding in London, and his friend, I suppose, has been in Scotland?"

"Oh, no—abroad—the East, America, anywhere but at home. Tom always liked him, and as soon as he could has struck up with him again."

"When is he coming?" asked Christine, "and why did he delay to write?"

"Kept prisoner in his Highland fastnesses by the floods, and sends special apologies to me. He will be here to-night in time for dinner. So I'll go and tell the servants, and then we'll have the pony carriage and drive till luncheon, shall we?"

The letter that had been received with such pleasure had not been written in the same spirit. That night had passed into broad day before Albert Delmar had even remembered that in the afternoon he had received other letters. Then occurred to him the necessity of making pretence that he had passed the night as usual. He left the sitting-room, and went up to his own room, from which he did not descend till his usual time. In the meanwhile the fire had been lighted, the room arranged, and the breakfast equipage placed ready. It looked like a strange place—not the room he had been in last night—not the room where he had lost himself and another had come in his place. The dog still lay on the hearth, but he did not come to his master; he only moved his tail gently, and looked up at him from between his forepaws. Delmar hardly noticed him; he saw the letters lying on a side-table, and took up Tom Lonsdale's.

"I have just taken a place here for the Long," wrote Tom, "and I have, like the man in the Bible, married a wife, so I do not offer you the doubtful comforts of a bachelor residence. Come and spend a few weeks with us. And, by-the-bye, there is another attraction. My Katie's school-chum is staying with us while her brother is on a rather prolonged honeymoon. Who do you think she is? None other than that sister Pel Clifford thought all the world of, and some of us were never tired of hearing about. She is the prettiest creature." Delmar was standing on the hearth while he read this letter. As he finished it his eyes looked down into the fire,

with a slow smile creeping into them. Not a smile that would have drawn a child to his side. The new master he had admitted last night held him, and ordered his very thoughts. That master knew no compromise, and the soul he had won went more than half-way to meet and welcome the sin that promised it what it had almost prayed for—revenge.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE train, a cross-country one, was late that August afternoon, and took time in the kitchen, her soul in her dinner, while the ladies waited in the long, low drawing-room. Christine paced up and down with her arms lightly folded, not thinking of the guest, but—a frequent object of thought—of her brother. Kate was on the tip-toe of expectation, and if she had been a little girl would have gone to the window to watch.

It was on this pretty scene of refined home life that Albert Delmar, fresh from his desolate mountain dwelling, and still tossed in the storm of two opposing passions, looked as Tom Lonsdale threw open the door. The contrast was startling. The little hostess came forward to the tall, bright-haired stranger with hospitable greetings, and while he answered them his eyes went to the girl who stood rather back, resting on her. She looking up as she shook hands, met a more intent gaze than was usual, but he dropped his eyes directly; and Christine, neither vain nor self-conscious, thought no more of it. Kate, as the two men went to their rooms, exclaimed with feminine delight how handsome the guest was, even acknowledging—a great thing for a young wife—that Tom couldn't come up to him. Dinner went off pleasantly. Tom declared it was like the old Oxford days, and was in a state of brimming delight. Christine listened with deeper pleasure to the cultured talk, joining in now and then, but more often quietly studying the "Albrecht" whose name had sometimes cropped up in Felham's letters to her. Christine was of a metaphysical turn, and Delmar puzzled her—why she could not yet tell. Until the elucidation came he interested her, and she could not help trying to bring about the elucidation.

"Of course you sing, Mrs. Lonsdale," said Delmar, in the drawing-room, after the coffee had been handed round. "May I beg the pleasure of hearing you?"

"You are a critical musician, are you not?" said Kate, rising at once, but looking doubtful. "I have the greatest dislike to singing before people like you."

"I did not know I was so terrible; Tom must have been romancing," said Delmar, smiling, inwardly thinking that probably the little lady was right, and her singing would be insupportable. "I have always flattered myself my tastes are catholic."

"Well," said she with a disconsolate shrug, "I will do my best. Christine, please play for me, and I'll choose the least objectionable of my ballads."

However, she sang an Irish song so well, and Christine played the accompaniment in so perfect a way, that even a connoisseur need not have been ashamed to take pleasure in the performance. Then Delmar, who had been turning over some music in a folio on the centre table, said to Christine,—"Miss Clifford, if all this music is yours—and your name is on most—you both play and sing. Besides, I am sure you do the first by the way you accompanied Mrs. Lonsdale."

Christine turned round on her seat at the piano. "Yes, I do both," she answered. "Which shall I do?"

"I am afraid I am very exacting, and you ladies are kindly spoiling me. Play first, please."

"Have you any favourites that perhaps I know?" said Christine.

"I shall be sure to like anything you choose." She twisted round again and with-



[A STRONG MAN'S AGONY.]

out a pause played two or three of the charming Kinderscenen.

The diversities of expression she gave faultlessly, now so light and playful, with a touch clear and crisp; anon soft and sad, and her fingers went over the keys like velvet. She had evidently forgotten her listeners, for she seemed absorbed in her music, with the tender lips a little parted in a smile, and the eyes looking upwards. It might have seemed affectation in some girls; but nothing Christine did was unreal, or had the appearance of it, except to cynics.

Delmar had not paid great attention to music, and studied it with an enthusiasm rare in amateurs, without becoming an excellent judge of the divine art. But this music had a little more power over him than he chose just now. Christine's playing was too exquisite, too full of soul for him to bear easily. He thanked her earnestly and reverted to the songs. Would she sing?

"I suppose you know this," said Christine, after a minute's thinking, and began the familiar accompaniment of Schubert's lovely "Ave Maria." "I am afraid it is too hackneyed; but still—"

The end of the prelude interrupted her, and a rich full voice of wonderful pathos and pleading uttered the first notes of the prayer. Delmar had almost cried out, had almost laid on the cruel white hands his own, and forced them to stay. His heart felt breaking. How could he stand and listen? Maddie had sung this for him so often, not as he heard it now, with such intensity of adoring entreaty; but did not that make it harder? It was as if Maddie's voice rose sweet and childlike, and yet it was he who was praying for help, for mercy, for relief. He went away from the piano, sitting down by a table and feigned to look at some photographs, leaning his head on his hand. After that struggle he knew how much he could bear, and show no sign.

They went out on the terrace as the moon rose, and the men, by permission, smoked their

cigarettes, talking of college days and telling college stories; while Kate and Christine listened, amused and interested. Then the church clock and those in the house chimed midnight, and Kate exclaimed how late it was, and they must separate. Good nights were exchanged, and each went to his or her room.

To Delmar, solitude—peopled though it was with memories bitter beyond expression—was a relief. The strain of the evening had told on him. He ought to have had freedom to be himself, and he had flung himself into a position where he was forced to play a perpetual part. He had come straight here from Daneswood; from the rooms where he had dreamed of and thought for Maddie, which she had made bright with her own brightness; from the sight of the river, the woods, the lanes, that were all like silent reminders of her. He loved so little like some men; the power of his love spread to all inanimate things. To snap one association was to snap a hundred; not only the supreme object of love was lost, but he lost with it a whole world. Life itself was riven.

And at Daneswood the full sense of that loss had come to him with a rush. He held to his one set purpose, as a means of relief and strength, as better men hold to faith in a strength higher than their own. But Delmar had taken suffering too hardly, had dwelt too closely on the injury received, to lean on a faith he had accepted as thousands do, but which had never shaped his life or been to him a reality. So now he was weary and worn out, yet he paced the room with characteristic restlessness. Neither mentally nor bodily could he take trouble quietly.

"So that is Clifford's sister," he thought, for no word passed his lips; "and I shrank when I first saw her. What if I have not strength to carry it through! What if I remember she is only a girl, and a man is a coward who hurts her!" He stopped, growing deathly pale; he had hurt himself with that ugly word. And now he half whispered

to himself, as if thought alone were not sufficient outlet. "She is a Clifford—his sister, the same blood—and a woman. What matter then? They are all alike; she would call all the saints in Heaven as witnesses to her truth, and forget my very name in a week. Why should I spare any one of his wretched blood? How else can I reach him without touching Maddie? I will never touch her, suffer who may! Besides, no revenge is so dear as this; to give exact blow for blow; to sear his life as he has mine; to give him some portion of my daily bread—the bread that will never fail me now; to know that he suffers and understands that I have dealt the blow, and why! It is not a coward's part. She is only a woman, and what do they care for love? I will go on. Why else did I come here! I will dare Heaven itself before I give up, and not on my head be it." Again he stopped. If not on his head, on whose, then? came the instant question. Whose was the hand that had first dealt out the evil measure? He sank down in a paroxysm of agony.

"Oh, my life, not on yours!" he said, over and over. "You will not suffer—I shall spare you! You had better have killed me than this, but Heaven help me, I love you still! I cannot tear it out! You stood at the gate that night with the glory round you, and you promised to love me always, and your soft lips were on mine! If I were strong enough to forget all that! If I did not grow faint at the thought of another in your place!"

He might have knelt and thanked Heaven for that failing strength and noble fear. But what was his crown of pride he despised as weakness. When the paroxysm had passed, his stern purpose rose up dominant as before—he would go on to the end without falter or turning back—suffer, make the innocent suffer, so he paid back to one man the terrible debt he owed him. And the saint's question to the young man he heard, but put aside—"What then?"

(To be continued.)



["LAURENCE, WHAT IS IT?" SHE ASKED, LOOKING UP INTO HIS FACE, WHICH WAS GHASTLY PALE.]

NOVELETTE.]

LAURENCE'S LOVE.

CHAPTER I.

It was spring in Creamshire—a delicious flowery, sunny spring. All Nature was rejoicing, and nowhere more gaily than at Hollytree Farm.

There were tender shadows amid the foliage of the new clad beech, daisies graced the trim, well-kept lawn, cowslips filled the meadows, blue-bells lifted their heads, as if trying to reach the long, slanting sunbeams; the delicate almond blossom perfumed the air with its fragrance, snow-white arabis, gay-coloured hyacinths, scarlet ribes, and the tri-leaved berberry gladdened the eye; while over the quaint, grey, old house crept and clung the deciduous yellow jasmine, and in odd, out-of-the-way nooks

"There sprang the violets all hewe,
And fresh pervinke, rich of hewe."

The venerable yew-trees, carved and cut into queer shapes, like elephants' heads and huge cock-robins, that flanked either side of the gateway at Hollytree Farm, were looking famous, and quite justified their owner, Mr. Trevor, in his pride of them and his burst of admiration as he came down the path from the house, slashing the grass with his whip, and occasionally letting the long lash fall gently across Nora, the bull-dog's, back, to check her noisy and obstreperous demonstrations of affection.

"I tell thee, Bab, the yews look grand!" he was saying to his wife, as she followed him down to the gate, where a dog-cart stood, horsed by a powerful bay mare. "Grand! There's nothing like them for many a mile around! Nor in all Creamshire, for the matter o' that. The whole place couldn't look better. It's just the thing for a Londoner, weary o' all the dust and the muck that's

there. I warrant you he'll like the green freshness o' his surroundings, and stay here many a month!"

"Ah! well, Nat," returned Mrs. Trevor, with something like a sigh, "I hope it'll all be as you say, and turn out fine for us."

"Why shouldn't it, lass?" he queried, sharply, wheeling round and facing her. "Why shouldn't it?"

"I—I don't know," she answered, hesitatingly. "Unless it is that we've been so long alone—you, I, and Jet. Maybe we won't get on so cosylike with a stranger in our midst."

"Pooh! Nonsense! We shall get on just as well; and you seem to forget he's a-going to pay liberal."

"No, I don't!"

"Then take it into consideration, and don't make such a poor mouth over the matter! Don't fash yourself any more, lass, but get in and set your rooms to rights, and see there's a rare good tea ready when I come back with Mr. Froom," and mounting into the cart and gathering up the reins, Farmer Trevor touched the mare, and away she sprang like a lightning flash, the bull-dog running quickly and easily at her heels.

On they went swiftly through the pretty Creamshire country, now rolling down a hill, slowly and surely, now going up one with a rush and skurry; on through rural lanes and shady roads, bordered with hedges and trees, beautiful with an exquisite tracery of pale green, and here and there the flash of opening buds; on through the leafy woodlands, where the moss was starred with bright-hued blossoms, and the air jubilant with wild birds' song; on through the village to the primitive little wooden station of Durdene, where the great, panting, snorting steam monster had just arrived as the farmer brought up his fidgety blood-mare to a standstill.

One solitary passenger alighted, and looked rather helplessly round as the train snorted and puffed, and went on its way again, leaving

him solus on the platform, with a bag, sketching paraphernalia, and portmanteau at his feet, an elongated overcoat on his arm, and a red setter at his heels.

The only porter visible was just disappearing through a door marked "Private," when Farmer Trevor, imagining the tall stranger was none other than his expected visitor, Mr. Froom, hullood loudly to him, and told him to ask the gentleman if he went by the name of Froom, and if he did, to bring his traps aboard the cart, and tell him Mr. Trevor was waiting for him.

Jim Rolt obeyed these directions, and a few minutes later the stranger was seated by the farmer, his baggage "aboard," and his long coat comfortably disposed of.

"Will your dog follow the cart?" asked his host that was-to-be, looking at the setter, who was exchanging salutations of a friendly nature with the ferocious-looking Nora.

"Oh, yes; Val is used to that sort of thing," replied the guest, and once more touching Fidget with the whip, her master urged her into a quick trot, and they went back through the lovely scenery that lies between Durdene station and Hollytree Farm.

On the way the old man grew quite communicative, and plunged into an account of his family affairs, to which his companion listened with but scant interest. He, however, did put one question, which was relevant to his own comfort,—

"Have you a large family, Mr. Trevor?"

"Nairey a one. Heaven did not bless us that way," and for a moment a shade of melancholy rested on the old man's sun-browned face. "But we have Jet," he added quickly, brightening visibly; "an' she's been a' most as good as a chick o' our own, an' we couldn't love her better if she were, than we do."

"Jet?" ejaculated his companion, interrogatively.

"My niece, sir."

"Oh!"

"I hope you don't mind her being one of the household. She ain't skittish at all," observed Mr. Trevor, with rather an anxious glance at his prize, the "artist-chap."

"Mind? Oh! not at all—not at all," responded Froom quickly, wondering to himself meanwhile, with no little amusement. What would be the result if he did "mind," and how the farmer, in case of his objecting, intended to get rid of that part of the live stock.

"She's the daughter o' my brother John," went on Trevor, in an explanatory way. "He was bookish, a regular scholar, his head crammed full o' learning. Not a bit like me," with a wave of the hand towards himself, meant to depreciate his rough speech and countrified appearance. "Cautel 'bout his dress, quite a dandy, an' handsome beyond description. After the old man's death he went up to London and married one o' the quality—a girl with blue blood in her veins, an' hardly a gown to her back, who fell in love with his comely face. He only lived two year after the marriage. We've a faint o' consumption in the family, an' pining over the books far into the night and want o' rest brought it out in him. Jack came down here to see what fresh air would do, but it wasn't a bit o' good; he drooped and faded like an' died in the autumn, just as the harvest was garnered in, an' his baby a twelvemonth old."

"Poor fellow!" said the listener, seeing he was expected to say something.

"Yes. It were mortal sad. His wife's agony was something awful to see. We buried him over yonder in Durden churchyard, an' she never could make up her mind to leave the place, though her grand relatives offered to take her back; but she wouldn't go, and stayed with us until she died also, eleven years later, o' my old woman says, a broken heart. Anyway, during those years it always seemed a struggle with her which she should do, stay on earth with her babe, or go to Heaven to join him, an' at last she made up her mind and died quietly."

"A very sad story."

"Yes sir; an' the only bright bit in it is Jet. She's lived with us now these seventeen year an' has been the sunshine o' our lives."

"Extremely kind and charitable of you to give her a home."

"Not a bit o' it!" exclaimed the farmer, sturdily. "Jet has sixty pound a-year o' her own, an' that more'n pay for her bite an' supe an' the pretty gowns she wears. But if she hadn't a happeny I'd be proud and glad to give her a home, ay! and share my last crust with her, an' so would my old woman. She's been a good child to us, bless her! An' she's educated well," he went on, with great pride. "Alicia taught her while she lived, an' afterwards our parson's wife, Mrs. Rose, had her to learn with her own children, from a grand French governess. So she speaks furri languages, an' plays the piany an' sings like a lark, and 'broiders beautiful, an'—an'—is quite a lady," concluded her trumpeter.

"Indeed," remarked, Froom, in rather a disgusted sort of way, a vision of a boarding-school miss with a dash of the dairy-maid about her, floating before his mind's eye.

Somehow or other, though, part of his discontent passed away as the farmer, saying, "Here we are," drew up by the huge cockrobin, and Froom's eye lighted on the gray rambling jasmine-covered house.

It was such a peaceful rural scene. The sinking sun had fallen below the canopy of tree-tops, and streamed in long, level lines of ruddy light, amid the tall columns of their stems.

Away in the cowslip-bordered meadows, down by the river, which glistened and sparkled along, stood the mine, knee-deep in the lush flower-enamelled grass, looking uneasily. Their udders were heavy with milk; they were waiting to be driven to the milking-sheds.

A drove of sheep were going towards their pen, guarded by a clever-looking colley.

Ringdoves and mottled pigeons cooed and wheeled overhead; rooks cawed and wrangled

in the high elm trees, while from the farmyard—which lay at the back of the house—came the cackle of geese, the gobble-gobble of turkeys, the unmelodious grunt of pigs, the stamping and neighing of horses, and the sharp, short bark of the watch-dog.

"This way, sir," said the farmer, throwing open the gaily-painted green and white gate, and going up the path between the tidy garden-beds of spring flowers.

Mr. Froom followed slowly, his eyes on the quaint, rambling old gray building, with the many-paned bulging windows, cross-beams of dark wood, gabled roof, and massive oak door—out of which stepped a girl in a simple black gown, with a great knot of cowslips and violets at her throat—a girl so perfect, so wonderfully beautiful, that Laurence Froom could only stare at her in speechless amazement; and when the farmer, with no little pride, announced, "My niece, Alicia Trevor," he clasped her outstretched hand in silence, and still gazed at the dark, bright, winsome face—the face of a woman, he felt whose life must be a romance, or whose loveliness would create one.

She was rather under middle height, but exquisitely moulded and graceful as a fawn. Her hair, which was deep purplish-black—and which, he afterwards learnt, gained her the sobriquet of Jet—was cut short, and wadded her shaggy little head in a becoming mass of ringlets and waves and airy cherubic curls; her little sweet mouth was arched and ruddy; her eyes gray, large, unfringed and dark-lashed; her nose straight and clear cut; her face, from brow to chin, a pure, uniform pallor.

Hitherto Froom had always admired women with a dash of crimson in their cheeks; but as he gazed at Jet he felt

"One think Laurence, one ray the less,
Had half impaired the nameless charm."

and that nothing could be more pleasing to the eye than that delicate watch whiteness.

Miss Trevor seemed to find his fixed gaze slightly embarrassing, for she stooped and picked up an atomie fox-terrier with a pink and brown nose and a stubby white tail, who was walking round Val in an aggressive and quarrelsome sort of way, as though inviting the setter to "come on" and fight like a man, or rather like a dog.

"My dog is very quiet," observed Froom, breaking the awkward silence. "I hope he won't inconvenience you at all. He must be chained up somewhere."

"Oh, no!" rejoined Jet, quickly. "It would be a shame to chain the poor fellow up. Boots is very quarrelsome at first, but will soon get used to him. In a day or two at most they will be capital friends."

"Boots! What a curious name for a dog!" "Yes. I called him Bijon when he was given to me two years ago a pup, a few weeks old; but he was rather mischievous and gnawed uncle's bluchers, so he said Bijon was too pretty a name for him and christened him Boots."

"Ah!" laughed Froom, as he patted the snarling atom's head. "See what a grand name you lost by your bad conduct!"

"He's a rare mischievous tyke," observed Mr. Trevor, with a glance at the blucher-loving Boots that was not altogether cordial. "But will you come in, sir? I'll show you your room," and Froom assenting, stepped through the massive, queerly carved doorway, and followed the farmer up the winding staircase to a fair-sized, low ceilinged room, under the gable in the roof of the two-storeyed old farm-house; a room smelling sweetly of lavender and dried rose-leaves, and looking deliciously clean, with its old-fashioned fringed white draperies, and spindle-legged Chippendale furniture. "I thought you would prefer this room, the view from it being the prettiest. But if you'd prefer any o' the others, sir, you can see them to-morrow and choose yourself."

"No, thank you," replied Froom, looking through the latticed window at the lovely view of meadow and field and woodland.

"This, I think, could hardly be improved on, and will just suit me in every respect."

"I am glad to hear you say so, sir. I'll leave you now, and send one o' the lasses up with your traps; and tea is ready in the parlour when you wish to come to it."

"Thanks. I shall be down in a minute. I only want a brush and comb and a little cold water."

In a very short space of time he had concluded his ablutions and descended the stairs, at the foot of which stood the farmer, waiting to show the "artist chap" the way to the parlour, and introduced him to Mrs. Trevor, who, gorgeously in a lavender silk gown, flounced and beflowered in the fashion of the year one, stood in the doorway to receive him.

"My wife!"

"Delighted to make your acquaintance, Mrs. Trevor," said Laurence, shaking her hand with an amount of cordiality that he would probably not have shown if her niece had been the mixture of boarding-school miss and milk-maid he had imagined her.

"Very kind of you, Mr. Froom," murmured the little apple-cheeked old lady, surveying with great dignity and quite a grand air, for she, having naturally good manners, and associating constantly with Jet, was entirely free from the coyness and provinciality, which, to a casual observer, conveyed the impression that her husband was quite a common and uneducated man. "I hope you will be comfortable here, and enjoy your stay with us."

"Thanks, I'm sure I shall," he answered, as they entered the parlour, his eyes resting on Jet, who was, like Werton's Charlotte, "gravely cutting bread-and-butter" from a huge home-made loaf, and trying at the same time to keep the stubby-tailed and belligerent Boots, who was seated on her lap, quiet, as he displayed evident signs of desire for a "round" with Val, who was following closely at his master's heels.

All through the meal Froom's eyes wandered back to Jet's beautiful face. It took his artist's eye the pale pure coloring, the straight features, the intellectual expression; and later on in the evening, when he stood in the garden, smoking a post-prandial cigar before going to rest, he seemed to see nothing of all the moonlit landscape, hear nothing of all the sounds of night. His eyes were blind and his ears deaf to all but the memory of one face and the echo of one voice; and throwing away his half-finished cigar, he went in under the roof that sheltered her.

Better, far better would it have been for him to have turned away into the darkness of the night, and never to have put foot again within Hollytrees Farm. Better for him and better for the being who was destined to be dearer to him than aught else on earth.

CHAPTER II.

Jet and her aunt were seated at the table when Froom entered the parlour the next morning, the former occupied, as she had been the evening before, in cutting bread-and-butter, and the latter busy with the coffee cups and tea-urn.

"I hope you'll excuse me, Mr. Froom," said the farmer, when the substantial breakfast came to a conclusion. "I have to go to a sale o' horses and beeves at Linthorpe's farm. If you'd care to go round and see the place, Jet'll take you, or she'll show you where there are pretty bits o' scenery. She knows 'em all."

"Thanks," replied the young man. "I should like to see the place, if Miss Trevor will kindly act as cicerone."

"Oh, yes! certainly, if you will wait a few minutes. I must just feed my dogs," and she went out of the room with her uncle, and Froom was left alone with a boxom, rosy-cheeked, country lass, who was clearing the table with a great deal of unnecessary noise and clatter, and who stole sundry surreptitious

glances at the tall, grave-looking stranger, whose blue eyes were wandering round the delightful, oak-panelled, old parlour in an inquisitive way.

"Your master and mistress don't generally use this room for meals, do they?" he asked, suddenly, addressing himself to the buxom wench, clattering the plates and dishes.

"No, sorr," she replied, blushing purple at being caught in the act of eyeing him curiously. "Which room do they use?"

"The second kitchen, sorr, over near our'n."

"I am ready now, Mr. Froom," said a sweet, even voice; and Jet stood in the doorway, with a great coarse sun-bonnet framing her delicate face.

"Oh, thanks!" rejoined the young man, stepping across to her side. "I hope I am not taking you from any daily duties?"

"Part of my daily duty lies in the farmyard," she answered, with one of her rare, sweet smiles, as they passed out into the garden. "I have my chicks to feed; and when uncle is away I always go round and see that the men are doing their work, and attending to the animals properly."

"Useful as well as beautiful," he murmured, sotto voce.

"I suppose you don't care much about pigs?" she asked, as they stopped for a moment by the sty, full of great, corpulent, pink pigs.

"No, not very much. They do not strike me as being particularly interesting animals. Grunting and eating—grunting and eating, so passing their lives."

"Yes, and varying those performances by squealing occasionally. Uncle Nat is very proud of his pigs, though. We need not look at them any longer, as they don't interest you."

"No, of course not," he agreed.

Not that he had been looking at them. His eyes had wandered constantly to her face, and he determined to ask permission to sketch her, in the shady sun-bonnet, as soon as he could, without giving offence.

Jet was entirely unconscious of his fixed gaze. There was a great deal more of the child than the woman about her, despite her eighteen years. She was unconscious of her great beauty. No one had ever spoken to her or complimented her on it. Her serene naïveté had never been disturbed. Aunt Bab had watched well over the sweet meadow-flower left to her care, and kept the young girl from all knowledge of the wicked ways of the world.

"These are my special pets!" she told him, gleefully, as a whole troop of little balls of yellow-down, who had the impudence to call themselves ducklings, and tiny, gray chicks came about, eagerly picking up the grain she sprinkled around.

Then she showed him the geese and the turkeys, and the great cart-horses, and a hundred other things that did not interest him the least little bit in the world. Only he liked to hear her talk; those sweet, even tones fell soothingly on his ear.

"The house looks very picturesque from here," he observed, when at last they had seen everything and turned to go in. "I must make a sketch from this point. Only I should like a figure in the foreground. I am afraid the farm-servants wouldn't do," he went on, untruthfully. "Would you pose for me one day, Miss Trevor?"

"Oh, yes!" she answered, readily; "if you think I will do."

"I am sure you will," and his words were accompanied with an admiring glance, which Jet didn't see, and if she had seen would not have understood.

"What room is this?" he queried, as they entered a long, low room, with a red brick floor, the painted walls decorated with shining tin covers and pewter-mugs, the dresser decked with a goodly array of plates and dishes, and where an ancient eight-day clock ticked away with measured and solemn regularity.

"This is a sort of parlour-kitchen. The

other kitchen"—and she pointed further down the passage—"is where the servants and farm-labourers take their meals, and where everything is cooked. Part of this house was built as far back as 1650. The date is carved on a beam in the entrance-hall; and I think this was the parlour before the one we use as a sitting-room was built."

"And generally you use this room, and my coming has upset your arrangements?"

"Aunt thought you would not care to dine in a place like this," she answered, simply.

"But I should!" he cried, quickly. "It is a delightful old room. Where is your aunt? I must beg her not to alter her plans on my account."

"Aunt is in the dairy."

"May I go there?"

"Yes," she answered, leading the way down a stone passage to the dairy—a great, cool, dim place—where large brown earthenware pans were filled to the brim with rich milk, and huge churns stood in vessels of iced-water, and troughs of buttermilk were ready to be carried off to the pigs, and butter in all shapes and forms lay about on marble slabs.

Mrs. Trevor, with her flowered, ghinzo gown tucked up under a big, white apron, was superintending several buxom dairy-maids, as they skimmed the contents of the brown pans, and whisked round the barrel-churns at terrific speed, and worked the butter into rolls and ornamental pats, finally placing it into boxes of rough pine, lined with paper and thin muslin, to be sent to market.

"Mr. Froom wants to speak to you, aunt," announced her niece.

"Lor, sir!" ejaculated the little old lady, startled out of her elegant manners, and trying vainly to untie the big, white apron and cast it from her.

"I won't trespass on your time for more than a minute, Mrs. Trevor," he said eagerly, noting her embarrassment. "I only wanted to ask you not to make any alterations on my account. Don't make a stranger of me, please. I should much prefer dining in the quaint, old room I hear you generally use than the other one."

"Really, I'm sure it's very good of you to say so, Mr. Froom; but a gentleman like you won't care to take your meals in a room like that!"

"Yes, I shall feel most uncomfortable if you put yourself to any inconvenience on my account. Being an artist, of course I like antique things and places."

"Well, if you wish it, we will dine in the second parlour," agreed Aunt Bab, remembering her husband's wish that the "artist chap" should like his surroundings and make a long stay with them. "Jet, my dear, will you tell Sukey to spread the cloth there in future?"

"Yes, aunt."

And Froom having obtained what he wanted, followed Jet out into the sunshine, and got his sketch-book and sketched the farmhouse, and Daisy, and Boots; and then took heart and asked Jet to pose for him; and she did, proving herself to be a very good model, and one who did not tire easily.

Then he discovered she could draw a little, and persuaded her, after a while to show him some of her efforts, which, though rough and crude, showed promise; and he pointed out mistakes, and gave hints, and made himself generally agreeable.

In the evening, as they sat in the grand parlour after tea, the farmer asked Jet to sing, which she did at once without any affectation or reluctance, and Laurence was agreeably surprised at the sweetness and purity of her voice and the taste with which she sang.

And so his first day at Holytree Farm passed, and another and another went by; a whole month came to an end, and still, to Farmer Trevor's intense delight, the "artist chap" showed no signs of going; on the contrary, he spoke and acted as though he intended to make a long stay—which was pleasing to others at Holytree Farm besides its owner.

Froom had become that rather dangerous thing, a "general favourite."

All the servants were ready to fly and do his smallest bidding; the farm-labourers and dairy wenches always grinned broadly from ear to ear when "Master Froom" gave them good morning.

Daisy, Boots, and many of the other animals had basely deserted Jet, and showed a decided preference for the new comer, while Aunt Bab, it is no exaggeration to say, was actually in love with him.

He won her heart by preferring to breakfast and dine in the picturesque red-bricked kitchen, thus saving her cherished parlour, with its treasured bric-a-brac, from the daily intrusion of clumsy-fingered servants.

Then he was so easily pleased. Always content with the huge rounds of beef and great legs of mutton that formed the homely diet at the farm, and declaring himself more than content with the big family gooseberry pies and puddings, made by Aunt Bab herself, and covered with rich thick cream, and he was invariably ready for tea, at which generally appeared a dish of buttermilk-cakes, a soda loaf, or a hot Sally-lunn prepared by Jet.

"I like this life, it just suits me," he said one day to the farmer. "I should like to live here for ever," he added, looking at his niece.

"I wish you could and would sir," replied the farmer, heartily.

"Perhaps I may," responded Laurence, with a little laugh.

"We shall be very pleased to ha' you with us as long as ever you wish to stay," went on the old man. "Won't we, Bab?"

"Yes, indeed," replied the little lady, looking at him tenderly.

Something in his fair face attracted her strangely—the sunny blue eyes wore such a kind, truthful look. Yet sometimes they were clouded, and the corners of his handsome mouth drooped with a weary, inexpressible sad look.

Whatever his sadness, though, he never breathed a word of it to his hosts. In fact, they knew very little about him, except that he had grown tired of London and London life, and had come to the country in search of fresh air and pretty scenery.

He never spoke of his relatives, beyond telling them that he was an only child, and had lost his mother, his only surviving parent, about a year before coming to live with them; and they were quite content to tell everything concerning their own affairs, in their usual simple-minded fashion, and hear next to nothing of his.

To Jet the advent of Laurence Froom to Holytree Farm was an event, which changed the whole colour and tenor of her life—im perceptibly and almost entirely unknown to her, but none the less thoroughly and effectually.

She had only existed before—a happy, free, innocent existence it is true, but still, only existence.

After his coming she *lived*, though she did not understand the difference, nor the drift of her thoughts and fancies. She was intensely, ignorantly, overpoweringly happy, with a trustful happiness that drew its light and colouring from his presence and daily, nay, hourly, companionship.

The whole world seemed fairer.

"The green grew golden above,"

to her the sun brighter, the flowers fairer, the nightingale's note sweeter. Life was fuller, broader, better, she thought. And the joy she felt shone in her long-lashed eyes, and brightened in her beautiful face.

"Summer always agrees with our little lass," observed the farmer, as he noted her shining eyes, and heard the rippling laughter break from her pretty lips.

"Yes," answered his wife, looking after the slender girlish form that was so dear—so very dear to both of them. "She seems to droop and pine in the winter."

"Ay! sunshine and fresh air are life to her. I wish all the year round 'twere summer, the

little lass brightens wonderful in the warmth o' May and June."

Farmer Trevor was blind, and Aunt Bab as bad; they did not see, poor old folk, that it was the summer of love dawning for Jet, that made her face bright and her heart gay. The sunshine of love, not the warmth of the summer winds, that gave new life to the little form, a sweeter tone to the clear voice, a gayer ring to the joyous laugh.

They were blind, and Jet was blind—blind and happy, with a happiness that comes but once, and once only, to poor mortals in this dreary, work-a-day world.

CHAPTER III.

"MAY I come and help you, Miss Jet?"

They were in the kitchen-garden—Laurence and Jet. She was kneeling among the strawberries, selecting the ripest and piling them carefully on a great cabbage leaf; he was standing by the rustic bridge which spanned the little brawling brook, that gurgled and rippled merrily along, dividing the kitchen-garden, gazing intently, yearningly, at the graceful, well-poised, dusky little head, on which the early morning sun was beaming. She was quite unconscious of his close proximity, and lifted her head to look at him, with a sudden rush of colour in her cheeks.

"Yes; you can come and help if you wish."

"Certainly I wish," and Froom strode across the gingerbread bridge, and selecting a cabbage leaf of huge dimensions from a pile besides Jet, proceeded to help in the operation of strawberry-picking.

"You have been eating as well as picking!"

"Of course, 'the labourer is worthy of his hire.' Besides, they always taste better in the early morning when the dew is on them."

"Really?"

"Yes, really!"

"I wonder if they do."

"Try one and see," she replied, holding up a ruddy, tempting berry.

"Thanks, I will," and taking it, he munched it slowly and gravely, as though, trying to get the full flavour of the dew.

"I think you are right. I never tasted anything more delicious."

He accompanied the words with a meaning look, of which, however, as usual, the young girl seemed to be quite unconscious.

Froom did not want or wish to say complimentary things, or to direct admiring glances at Jet Trevor. There was a dark passage in his past life which cast its shadow over the present, and which made him care to have little to do with women; and yet, though he struggled hard against the inclination, he found himself continually making complimentary remarks, and letting his eyes dwell admiringly on her perfect face.

She exercised, entirely unknown to herself, a fascination over him. He tried to battle against it, to avoid her society, but found himself powerless, and drawn back to her side by an influence he could not resist.

"I must go away," he muttered to himself, as he watched her, the sun blazing down on her upturned face, as she gazed at the deeply blue sky.

The strong light showed no flaw in the perfect, transparent skin, only threw into deeper relief the thick inkish lashes that shaded the large-pupilled radiant eyes, and lit up the purplish-black curls and rings of hair.

"I must go away; it is my only chance of safety."

"What are you thinking of, Sir Einar?" asked Jet.

She had called him playfully after the name of the Scandinavian archer hero.

"Einar Tamerskelver, bare
To the winds his golden hair,
By the mainmast stood;
Graceful was his form, and slender,
And his eyes were deep and tender
As a woman's, in the splendour
Of her maidenhood."

"What are you thinking of?" she repeated.

"Of helping you to carry those strawberries

to the house, and then of having some for breakfast," he replied with great gravity; and suiting the action to the words, he stooped and lifting up the cabbage leaves, carried them carefully into the parlour, and placed them before Mrs. Trevor, who was occupied, as usual, in manipulating her quaint, old Worcester coffee cups. "Those are all for you."

"Not all, my dear, thank you," ejaculated Aunt Bab, who had a way of taking *au sérieux* everything that anybody said. "I couldn't manage them all."

"Not even after my taking the trouble to get up early and pick them for you?" said Laurence, reproachfully.

"I'm greatly obliged to you. But there are so many—I'm sure I can't manage them all," sighed the little lady despairingly.

"You are not meant to, aunt," said Jet, coming to the rescue. "I picked most of those, and want some, and Mr. Froom has been regarding them longingly; and of course, uncle, you will have some."

"O' course, dearie," responded the old man, helping himself plentifully to the ripe tempting berries.

"Now, Miss Jet, that is too bad."

"What is too bad? Do you mean my preventing Aunt Bab from trying to eat all those strawberries and making herself ill? Why if she did we couldn't go to Durdene Wood this afternoon, and you would not be able to make those sketches you have been talking about for weeks past."

"Ah, true. We must get to Durdene."

"It will be a lovely day for it. Can you come with us, Uncle Nat? We go about four, and intend to have tea in the wood; and Kitty, Jenny, and Jack are coming over to go with us."

"No, dearie. I can't go with you, as I have business to see to at Hazleton, but I'll ride round that way, and come home with ye."

"That's right. We will look out for you, and keep some tea hot."

That afternoon a merry party was assembled in Durdene Wood. They had chosen a lovely glade, with an endless vista of green leaves, and row after row of copper-beeches and grand forest trees. The warm sunlight flickered through the thick foliage, and danced in chequered patches on the mossy sward as the soft wind gently stirred the boughs, where wild strawberries and raspberries, mingled with oump-moss, grew in uncultivated luxuriance. The warm air was full of the sounds and scents of summer. Bees hummed, butterflies swept by, the low coo of the wood-pigeon, and the untrained sweetness of the blackcap's note, rang on the air, filled with the perfume of grasses, flowers, and pine-wood.

Under a shade of a grand old oak, Jet and Kitty Linthorpe spread the cloth, while Froom and George Linthorpe kindled a fire, and along a kettle on a sort of triangle they made with stout sticks. Everyone was busy. Even Aunt Bab assisted to lay the sylvan tea-table, and very quickly a boned turkey, a ham, daintily pink-ruffled, a pigeon-pie, bread, cakes, jam, gooseberries, cherries, currants and other delicious fruits decked the snowy cloth; and when, after several mishaps, the kettle *did* boil, they made tea, and Jet poured it out, and they all set to work laughing and chattering like a crew of magpies to demolish the good things.

Tea was rather a lengthy affair, Mr. Trevor arriving before it was over.

"I must sketch this glade before the sun sinks lower," said Froom, seizing his sketch book, and beginning to draw rapidly.

"How lovely!" whispered Jenny Linthorpe when it was done, and handed round for inspection.

"I wonder why I hate those girls so much, and that cub, their brother," mused Laurence. He would not own, even to himself, that he was jealous, and yet it could have been no other feeling that made him dislike the honest, warm-hearted young farmer.

George Linthorpe was a good-looking well-to-do specimen of the yeoman class, upright and

honourable, and hopelessly, irretrievably in love with Jet. He had been in love with her from the first moment he saw her, a little dusky-headed, large-eyed child, and was at no pains whatever to conceal it. He intended to ask her to marry him some day, to come and be mistress of his flourishing farm. Meanwhile he was in the habit of riding to Holly-tree Farm more often than was absolutely necessary, and would stand leaning over the gate, chatting to Jet, telling her how Buttercup, his favourite cow, was getting on after straining her leg, or how large Meg Merrilies's foal was growing, and how promisingly stock was coming on up at Blue Ash.

Laurence felt an unaccountable sense of annoyance when ever he saw them together; and when they strolled off through the wood side by side, he closed his sketch-book abruptly, and asked the Misses Linthorpe, if they would not like a walk also? They gave a delighted assent, only too glad to have the chance of walking with a Londoner, and "such a handsome man," as Jenny termed him, when discussing him afterwards with her sister. The "handsome man," however, was anything but talkative, and rather well pleased when a gipsy woman approached them, whose advent was hailed with delight by the girls, who held out their podgy red hands eagerly for the sibil to scan, and listened breathlessly to what she gabbled out.

"Cross the gipsy's hand with siller, pretty lady," said the crone, in a coaxing tone to Jet, who had joined them with George, and stood looking on, "and she'll tell you all about the lover you have, and the dark cloud that shadows his life."

"This lady has no wish to listen to your rubbish," cried Froom, contemptuously, and drawing Jet's hand through his arm he strode off towards the oak where the old people were waiting for them.

"I wonder how Miss Linthorpe can listen to that old witch's chatter," he said, as they went quickly on.

"So do I," she replied, with a light laugh. "It is all nonsense."

"Of course it is," he agreed.

"Utter nonsense. I have not got a lover," the girl continued, innocently; "and she said she would tell me all about him."

"Of course. Those sort of people sometimes make clever guesses, and hit the nail straight on the head; as a rule, though, they talk unmitigated rubbish."

"Yes."

"If you had a lover," he went on, a minute later, "and you knew there was some mystery—some secret in his past life—would you expect him to tell it you? To lay bare all the miserable facts of something that happened long before he knew you?"

"No!" responded Jet, promptly. "I could not love without trust. I should think he was right to keep silent about his past life, and that it was better for me not to know what had gone before. Certainly I should never ask for an explanation, or try to pry into anything he might wish to keep secret."

"I don't think you would," and involuntarily Froom pressed the little hand resting on his arm close to his side before relinquishing it, as they reached the group under the oak.

"How will you go home, Mr. Froom?" questioned Trevor, as he neared.

"I will walk," replied the young man.

"Will you take my horse and ride?"

"No thanks. Five miles is nothing of a walk."

He wanted to be alone to think, and knew if he took the horse that he must ride alongside the waggons and listen to the merry chatter of the girls; so he stole himself against the pleading look in Jet's eyes, and, waving his hand in farewell, strode off on his lonely walk through the darkening glades.

During that solitary walk he made up his mind to leave Hollytree Farm within the next few days.

"I must go," he mused. "It will be better. Jet is young—happy. I could not tell her of that

black cloud in the past, and it will be better for her to marry Linthorpe. A little longer and I shall be madly in love with her, and unable to go away and leave her."

"A little longer!" How he deceived himself. He was in love with her, honestly, truly. Trevor's little soft-eyed lass had twined herself round and round his heart. Nothing but death—and death alone—could free him from his bonds.

CHAPTER IV.

"You will come to-morrow, Miss Jet, without fail?"

"Yes, certainly, unless it is a very wet day."

"I don't think there is much chance of that. And you, Mr. Froom, shall we see you at our haymaking?"

"He will have to go," said Jet, quickly, not giving Laurence time to answer for himself. "Uncle is too busy to go, and there is no one else to take me. Aunt Bab isn't feeling at all well."

"In that case, of course, I must escort you. I shall be very pleased to come to your place, Linthorpe."

"And I shall be very pleased to see you there," replied the young farmer, cordially, quite unconscious that he was inviting a dangerous rival over his threshold. "Good-bye, Miss Jet, good-bye. I hope you will manage to come early to-morrow," and touching the powerful roan he rode with his heel, he galloped off at a great rate in the direction of Blue Ash.

The next morning the sun was up in a cloudless sky, as Jet looked out from her rose-decked lattice under the gable in the roof of the old house. There was not a speck on the blue sky, the sunbeams poured down in steady uninterrupted brilliance; the whole sweetness of summer seemed concentrated in the air that swept languidly over Holytree Farm.

"It is a lovely day, my dear," said Aunt Bab, as her niece appeared in the parlour, dressed and ready to set out for the Linthorpe's junketing. "I think you will enjoy yourself. How are you going?"

"Mr. Froom is going to row me down. It is the pleasantest way."

And pleasant indeed she found it, steering the little skiff, while Laurence pulled away steadily, making the boat cleave quickly through the sparkling water, shaded here and there by drooping pollard willows.

"You don't exert yourself much," she said, after a while, smiling at him, and letting her eyes rest with unconscious fondness on his handsome face.

"Don't you think so?" he replied, returning her glance with interest.

"No. You are lazy."

"Very well, then, I am lazy, and think I shall continue to be so, as I see no particular reason for hurrying myself."

And he didn't. There in the boat he had her all to himself, and could study her pale loveliness, set off by the white dress and hat she wore, as much as he chose. At the farm it would be different, he would have to share her society with others, and that did not suit him. He grudged even a glance given to others by this girl, the mere touch of whose little hands made his head swim and set the blood tingling in his veins.

He had striven hard to go away, to leave her and Holytree Farm for ever, but his love was stronger than his sense of honour; and he stayed on and on, unable to tear himself away from her, and thrust out of his life and his memory the beautiful face that had created such an uncontrollable passion in his breast.

"I don't believe you care to go to-day," she observed, after a while.

"Don't you?"

"No; you are only going to please me, not to please yourself. Confess now that you are utterly indifferent to the prospect of assisting at haymaking, tennis-playing, syllabub-drinking, and other rural amusements?"

"Well, I must confess," he answered,

coolly, "that I would just as soon, perhaps sooner, be here alone with you on the river."

"But you will see beautiful scenery and meet several people."

"Yes, and they will see you."

"Of course."

"Well, I would rather reserve that privilege entirely for myself."

"Would you?" she said, innocently, the meaning of his words passing by her.

"Yes; but I suppose I can't," and with a sigh he dipped the oars once more in the water, and sent the skiff rapidly along.

The merriment was at its height when they arrived at Blue Ash. The hayfield was crowded with gaily-dressed people; many of the girls were trying awkwardly enough to handle the great rakes, and draw them through the grass; spoony couples were sitting on mounds that had been piled up, whispering soft nothings to each other; tankards of syllabub, cider, and foaming ale were being handed round by boxom country wenches, and were largely patronized by the stalwart, sun-browned farmers, who mustered strongly at the gathering.

On the trimly-cut, even lawn before the house, nets were stretched, and tennis balls were flying about in all directions, swiftly pursued by eager players. Jenny Linthorpe, conspicuous in a badly-made pink flannel gown, was rushing everywhere, with arms and legs sprawled out, and flourishing about like a windmill in a gale, in her desperate endeavours to distinguish herself as a tennis-player; while Kitty, attired in a much-befrilled stiffly starched white costume, in which, with her dumpy, undersized body and toddling walk she resembled a baby in a go-cart, stood beside her brother, doing the honours and receiving their guests.

The young farmer's honest face brightened as his eyes lighted on Miss Trevor.

"A fine day, you see, Miss Jet," he remarked, originally. "I am so glad you've come. Let me take you into the field; the Martins are there, and several others you know."

As she took his arm and walked away with him, Kitty pounced upon Laurence, and managed to keep him, much against his will, chained to her side nearly the whole afternoon.

To Froom the thing was a fiasco. From afar he could see Jet surrounded by all the eligible young men, and followed like a shadow by Linthorpe, who neglected his duties as host in his anxiety to be agreeable to the girl he loved. It was quite late before Laurence got a chance of escaping from Kitty and speaking to Jet. She was sitting in the capacious swing watching the tennis-players.

"Have you enjoyed it?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied, lifting her long-lashed eyes to his; "and you?"

"Not much. I have seen so little of you," he added, pointedly, with a glance that seemed to pierce the veil of her childlike innocence, and which brought the colour to her cheeks, and made the heavy lids drop.

"We will go when you wish," she said, shyly.

"I wish it now," he rejoined, eagerly, "unless you care to stay longer."

"No, I am ready to go now," and after making their adieux, they once more entered the little skiff, and set out on their homeward way.

That night Froom made up his mind to ask Jet to be his wife. His jealousy had been aroused, and his passion stimulated by the sight of other men paying her attention. He had thought she was there, close to his hand, a little wild rose, that he could gather and wear in his breast when he pleased; but suddenly he had awakened to the fact that her loveliness would be coveted and sought after by others, and that if he did not hasten to claim her for his own, that she might be lost to him.

Jet, however, seemed to know by intuition that a crisis in her life was at hand, for the

next day she avoided him, was not even present at breakfast, and he did not find her alone until towards evening, when he discovered her in the kitchen garden picking fruit, with a huge old straw sun-bonnet half hiding her beautiful face.

"I am coming to help you," he announced; and without waiting for permission, he squatted down beside her, among the currant bushes, something after the fashion of the unspeakable Turk, and picked currants and threw them into the basket, with as much gravity as Jet herself displayed.

And she saw nothing comical about the business.

Gathering fruit to make pies had always been a very serious affair to her, ever since she was a little girl, and had been deputed to that office; she only felt an unaccountable shyness in his presence, and kept her eyes resolutely turned away from his.

"Where have you been all day?" he demanded.

"I went to Durdene church."

"What were you there all day?"

"Oh, no," she replied, plunging into conversation eagerly, to hide her embarrassment, "I went to see my old nurse Bennett afterwards. Do you know summer is drawing to a close, the meadow-sweet is beginning to turn brown? I did not see a single dog-rose in the hedges, and the honey-suckle is quite thin!"

"Really!" he remarked, never taking his eyes off the lovely face, which was covered with blushes, and in consequence, putting as many currants on to the earth as he did into the basket.

"Yes, and the wheat is yellowing fast."

"Indeed!"

"Yes—indeed—and—and the heads of briony are turning, too," she went on, getting more and more confused under his steady gaze, "and the hazel nuts are browning fast—and I dare say will be ripe before you go away," she added desperately.

"I shall never go away," he declared solemnly.

"Never!" she echoed, looking up with amazed eyes. "Why?"

"Because I love you Jet, and life wouldn't be worth living away from you and Holytree Farm."

"Love me?" she murmured, a deeper crimson flush staining the pale purity of her skin.

"Yes—love you, steadfastly, honestly, unchangeably. And you, Jet," he went on eagerly, clasping one of her little reddened hands in his, "you—you do not hate me, do you?" and his eyes sought hers with a passionate longing.

"No," she answered slowly, "I don't think I hate you."

"And do you think you love me?" he whispered.

"Yes, I think I do."

"Well enough to be my wife?"

"Yes."

The next moment she was in his arms, and the old straw sun-bonnet was being flattened against his breast, and her eyes, lips, and hair kissed in a vehement, violent sort of way, while he babbled out disjointed terms of endearment, in the usual fashion of newly-declared lovers.

After a while Jet gently released herself from his encircling arms, and, to hide her modest embarrassment, turned to look for more fruit, and found her basket overturned, whereupon Laurence, seeing her dismay, dropped down on his knees, and proceeded to gather up the currants, grubbing up a considerable amount of earth and dirt with them, and, while gazing into her sweet face, was blind and indifferent to the absurdity of his posture and occupation.

"Such a lord is love." Froom, who had been one of the cream of Piccadilly dandies, and a fashionable club man, in the extreme sense of the word, was content, nay, more than content, to grub up fruit and damp mould for the girl he had learnt to love so well; and

when the basket was once more full, he slung it on his left arm, and drawing her hand through his right, they strolled slowly up the path to the house, where Mrs. Trevor sat in the parlour, nodding a little over her knitting, enjoying the brilliant sunshine, and the perfume of roses and mignonette that was wafted in through the open window.

"Congratulate me, Aunt Bab?" said Froom joyously, depositing the dirty basket on one of the spindle-legged little tables, utterly regardless of the damage he was doing to the tasselled antimacassar which covered it. "Kiss me—for you are going really to be my aunt—and bless us. I am the happiest man in the world. Jet has promised to be my wife!"

"Your uncle has consented, Jet. What have we to wait for now? Why should we wait?"

They stood under the shade of the great heavily-laden apple trees out in the orchard a week later.

He held both her hands clasped tightly in his, and was looking down at her with a world of passionate love and longing in his blue eyes. She was standing with head slightly drooped and averted, a flush on her usually pale cheek.

"Why should we wait, my dearest?" he demanded again, as she remained silent.

"We—have—known each other such a short time!" she faltered. "Only four months."

"Only four months!" he repeated. "Has not that been long enough for you to learn to love me in, child? Or do you want four years to let the love grow perfect, and learn to care for me more?"

"It is perfect. I shall never love you more, Laurence. I could not!" she answered, lifting a pair of shy grey eyes to his, in which burned such a pure, steadily love-light that he could not doubt, but only caught her to him and kissed her fondly.

"Then let our wedding-day be soon," he urged. "Aunt Bab will rejoice, I know."

"You must not be too sure of that; she may miss me."

"She can't miss you for long, Jet; as we are coming back to live here. Now—when shall it be, little tease?"

"You are in such a hurry," she murmured.

"Yes," he assented, looking down at her, and putting his hand under her chin to turn her face up to his. "I am in a hurry. I want my happiness."

"Shall I make you happy—really happy?" she asked, earnestly.

"Yes, dearest," he answered, simply; "as nothing else can."

"Then it shall be when you wish, Lorry."

And Lorry showed shameless haste, and hurried matters to such an extent that the wedding was fixed for the last day of August.

It was to be a very quiet affair. Froom had no wish to be made a show of, and stared at by gaping rustics, and his will was Jet's. So the simple homely preparations were made without any fuss or display, and only a few of the Trevors' intimate friends let into the secret. The Linthorpes were among the few favoured ones, and that "ignorance is bliss" was certainly true in the case of the young farmer. He had been dreaming his love-dream in blissful ignorance of the coming event; picturing to himself the joy he would feel when Jet was installed mistress of Blue Ash, and himself and his bees and horses and fat sheep and well-filled granaries; and, lo! suddenly, without a word of warning, came the news that she was going to be another man's wife.

The blow fell on him with crushing force. It stupefied and bewildered him; he felt that all interest in his farm was at an end, and walked about in a dazed kind of way, neglecting his usual occupations and avocations; conscious that something had gone out of his life, and of a dull, ceaseless pain at his heart. His roan mare, Pogy, never felt the pressure of his knees during those to him dreary, sunless days; the corpulent pink pigs, fattening for the cattle-show, did not receive a

single glance from their master's critical eye; pretty Buttercup and her little calf were passed by with indifference; and even the crew of Michaelmas geese, fat and flourishing, spluttering and hissing, amid the stubble, failed to extract a single word of admiration from his down-drooped lips.

He wandered about aimlessly, spending most of his time in Durdene wood, pressing his lips to the hard, senseless bark of a tree on which Jet had carved her name that afternoon, but a few weeks back, when they had picnicked so merrily under the shade of the old oaks.

"You haven't been down to the Trevors, George, to congratulate Jet," remarked Kitty, a few weeks before the wedding. "Aunt Bab told us so this afternoon when we were there, and seemed surprised about it. You ought to go."

"No, not yet," replied the young man, wining, and turning deathly pale, under all his healthy sunburn. "I suppose I must go."

"Of course you must. Such old friends—it would look rather odd if you did not."

"Very well. I will see if I can go down there to-night."

But he did not; nor the day after that, nor the day after that again. It was only on the eve of her wedding-day that he mustered up courage, and set out for Hollytree Farm. It was a ten-mile walk from one farm to the other, and he went slowly enough, with down-bent head and dragging step. He shrank from seeing the lovers together, and drew his breath hard as he pictured Froom with his arms unregarded round Jet's waist, and his head close to hers.

Fate, however, favoured him, and he had not the misery of seeing them together.

Froom had gone over to Durdene on some business matter connected with the morrow, and Jet was alone in the dim, flower-scented old garden.

"Good evening, Miss Jet," he said, in a half-stifled voice, as he swung back the gaily-painted gate, and strode over the trim turf to her side. "I have come to congratulate you—and—and—Mr.—Froom—and to wish you every happiness in your married life."

"Thanks, George. You are very kind," she answered, simply, giving him a little hand, which he took tenderly between both his, and, somehow or other, forgot to release for a whole minute.

An older and wiser woman would have noticed the lingering pressure, and the mute look of agony in his eyes, but Jet was too little versed in the ways of the world, and saw nothing odd in the fact of her old playfellow holding her hand rather over the time of a conventional hand-shake; neither did she notice the strained look of pain in his eyes. She only thought he wasn't looking very well—and told him so.

"No, they tell me up at the Ash that I don't look very bright, and I don't feel so," he replied wearily, running his fingers through his crisp, brown curls, as though to move away some weight or pressure.

"You have been working too hard over the harvest, perhaps."

"No, I don't think it is that."

"You want a change of scene and air."

"No."

"What can be the matter, then?"

"One can't always tell," he answered, with a dreary laugh, his miserable eyes fixed on her face with a devouring intensity. He felt that it was the last time that he would have the shadow of a right—that he might dare to look at her so; and though it pained him to gaze on what could never be his, yet with the inconsistency of man, he was taking his fill of the "sweet sorrow."

"Looking his station a lovely face, a face for another's joy."

"Won't you come in and see uncle?" she suggested, after a pause, which she filled up by arranging the flowers she had gathered.

"No, not to-night," he said, wrenching his eyes away from her face. "I came to see you

only. I—I want you to accept a little present I am sending you," he went on, brokenly. "It is a miniature phaeton, like the one my sister drove; and I am sending you Shiloh, the little pony you admired so much the last time you were up at Blue Ash. If you'll accept them, you know what pleasure it will give me."

"Oh, George, how kind of you!" cried the young girl, delightedly. "I have had heaps of beautiful presents, but nothing I shall prize so much as yours. It is what I have wished for over and over again. I shall be able to drive Laurence about in it when we return!"

"Yes," he agreed, faintly.

"I wish he was here now, to join me in thanking you. I expect him back every minute; you must wait and see him."

"I can't, indeed!" replied Linthorpe, hurriedly. It was unspeakable bliss to the poor fellow to have those little hands clasped round his arm, that sweet face looking up to his; but he couldn't trust himself. His love was too powerful; he had only to bend his head, and he could kiss the lips he had never touched; he felt another moment and he would yield to the temptation; so pressing her hands, and murmuring something about its being late, and a long walk, he turned away abruptly and left her.

"Why didn't Linthorpe come in, dearest?" asked old Trevor, as Jet entered the parlour, where he was sitting with Aunt Bab, smoking a long churchwarden.

"He had to walk back to Blue Ash, and he didn't seem at all well to-night."

"Perhaps he had a bit of a sunstroke during harvesting," remarked the old man, as he refilled his pipe.

"Perhaps he has," assented Aunt Bab.

But George Linthorpe had had no sunstroke, he was only lovestruck, and well-nigh heart-broken, as he walked rapidly through the darkness of the late summer night, and when he reached the meadow surrounding his house, he flung himself face downwards in the dewy aftermath, and groaned aloud in his anguish.

"Oh, my darling! I can never forget you!"

CHAPTER V.

It was a very quiet bridal cortege that wended its way through the quaint churchyard of Durdene the next morning.

The bride was not attended by any maids in gay attire; only followed by Aunt Bab, arrayed in a wonderful antediluvian, grey satin gown, that some of the onlookers whispered had been her own bridal robe, when, at a somewhat advanced age, she married Nathaniel Trevor, who in turn was followed by the said Nathaniel Trevor, gorgeous in a blue coat, with brass buttons, and a "hunt" waistcoat of many colours, that gave Froom quite a turn when he caught sight of it, as he came to meet them in the porch; and though he did love his bride very dearly, made him wish that the old man would not be quite so gay in his dress on special occasions.

The old gentleman, however, sublimely unconscious of the sensation his attire was creating, led Jet down the aisle on his arm in quite a gallant fashion; and when the clergyman asked, "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" he roared out, "I!" in stentorian tones; and taking her hand placed it in the minister's with a sounding smack, which proceeding was followed by an audible titter from the bystanders, and then turning round he winked, and made queer contortions at Aunt Bab, who was terribly nervous and overcome, and who wept silently behind a huge lace-trimmed-mantle of a handkerchief, and at some of his intimates who thronged the church, as though he would convey to them the fact that he could teach them a thing or two in the matter of giving away brides.

Altogether Froom was anything but sorry when the ceremony came to an end, and he was speeding away in the travelling carriage as

fast as four horses could take him, alone, with only Jet beside him.

Jet, who was all dimples and blushes and shy happiness, and who hid her face on his breast, when he caught her to him, regardless of the damage he was doing to the dainty white lace-trimmed gown that she and Aunt Bab had spent such an amount of time and labour over, and murmured passionately,—

"My darling! my wife! mine now for ever!"

"Yes, Laurence," she whispered, lifting her face for a moment to his, and glancing at him under her lovely long eyelashes, "yours until death parts us."

"Do not speak of death, my dearest," he answered, quickly, as a cold shudder ran through his frame. "It is only with life we have to do," and he clasped her more closely, more tenderly in his strong arms, and gazed down yearningly at the beautiful face that lay on his bosom.

"And with death—"

"Nay," he cried, "I will not have you speak of it," and bending till his mouth rested on hers he closed her willing lips with a kiss.

The days of the honeymoon appeared long and dreary to Aunt Bab and Uncle Nat.

Somewhat or other the old house did not seem homelike without Jet's light, graceful figure flitting about, without her joyous laugh, and the echo of her sweet-toned voice.

Froom extended the length of their trip, and took her to London, and even indulged her with a brief glimpse of Paris and Switzerland.

Ruddy autumn had thrown its spell over hill and dale ere they returned to Hollytree Farm.

The trees had lost their summer robes of tender green, and were a mass of red, fiery bronze, and ochre tints; the elms were yellow, the acorned oaks buff and brown, the huge sprays of the horse chestnuts scarlet; the hips and haws were ripe, and the hazel nuts hung in great brown clusters away in the dim recesses of Durdene Wood.

The fields on the hillside were a desert of stubble, the moor purple with heather, and in the flaming tree-tops the crows and rooks flapped their wings and cawed the whole day through.

There was the smell of ripened fruit on the air, and from amid the pickety stubble rang out the quick, sharp report of guns, as sportsmen knocked over the partridges.

Jet's greatest delight was to drive her husband about through the lovely scenery in the little pony-carriage Linthorpe gave her.

It was not autumn to her, but an Indian summer, a sort of aftermath, of warmth and glow and brilliance.

Laurence was always eager and ready to go with her wherever she wished. He had not sunk the lover in the husband, but was more devoted than before his marriage. He could not bear her out of his sight for a moment; and if he went with Uncle Nat to have a shot at the stubble-chicks, or try his luck with a fishing-rod, he always became restless and uneasy, and would hasten back at the first opportunity and under the smallest pretext; and she, whom he loved better than anything else in the world, would wait for him at the gate, dressed all in white—which set off her dazlingly pure, pale complexion—as he liked to see her; and would throw her arms round his throat, and kiss him twenty times, as though he had been away a week instead of an hour or two. He never wearied of her kisses or seemed to tire of gazing at her lovely face.

The old people had wisely given up the parlour to the bride and her groom, and of an evening they would sit there, reading or chatting, and he kneeling beside her listening to her sweet voice while she sang.

In the mornings they took long walks and sketched pretty bits of scenery, and in the afternoon drove out in the little phaeton.

And they both enjoyed life, they were wrapped up in each other, and sufficient for each other, and wished for nothing more; and no shadow of the dreary future fell

across them, or marred their perfect happiness.

So life went on with peaceful evenness, until one bright, crisp December day the antique post-boy who delivered the letters at Hollytree Farm brought Froom a large, blue, legal-looking document, which he at once tore open and scanned eagerly.

"Jet!" he cried, "what will you say to your husband's three hundred pounds a-year becoming five thousand?"

"I shall say that I am very glad, dear Laurence, for your sake."

"And not for your own, sweet wife? Will you love me more?"

"Laurence!" she cried, reproachfully. "How can you ask me such a question? I could not love you more. You have all my heart, all my love. If I lost you, or your affection changed towards me, I should not care to live."

"My dearest, I was only jesting," he answered, stooping to kiss her. "My uncle, Roger Froom, is dead, and has left this money to me."

He did not tell her that, as well, he was a baronet by his relative's death, having been the heir-presumptive to the title and all the broad lands that went with it; he felt it would distress so young and unsophisticated a girl to have honours thrust on her, and he would tell her, he thought, at some future time.

"I shall have to leave you, dearest, for a day or two," he remarked, after studying the documents.

"Leave me, Laurence!" she exclaimed, in dismay. "Can I not go with you?"

"It is such severe weather for you to travel in; and then I should have to leave you alone all day in an hotel. I shall be engaged with my lawyers. You will be better here, dear, with Aunt Bab. I promise you I won't be away for more than two days at the outside."

And he was as good as his word. He started the next morning, and returned the day after, just as the shades of evening were beginning to fall. He met Linthorpe at the station, and insisted on his returning with him to the farm; and the young man, having no sufficient excuse ready, was obliged to accompany him and witness the passionate embrace that passed between Froom and his wife as they met. He turned white to the lips, and his heart beat till he felt suffocating, but he rallied himself with an effort, and greeted them all in an ordinary way, and managed to answer calmly when they commented on his changed appearance, and the rarity of his visits to Hollytree Farm, and promised to come more often.

"You must come oftener," said Laurence, after the young farmer took his leave, and he was walking down with him to the gate. "Now that I have had this money left me I shall buy some land about here and build a house for myself, and I want your advice and counsel. I shall have it in about two months' time, and then shall set to work and spend part of it in erecting a house that will be a fitting abode for Jet."

But Laurence Froom reckoned without his host. Two months had barely elapsed when another letter came to him; and Jet, when she entered the parlour, found him standing by the window motionless, his face lividly pale, marks of blood on his nether lip, where his teeth had clenched on it, his eyes widely distended, as though he had seen something horrible, and grasped in his hand a letter.

"Laurence! my dearest, what is the matter?" she asked, wildly.

A shudder ran through his frame, as he felt the touch of her hands, but he did not answer.

"Laurence! Laurence! Oh, Heaven! what has happened?"

"I have had bad news," he said, at last, speaking slowly and heavily, while another convulsive shudder shook him from head to foot. "Bad news—bad news. I must leave you, Jet. I must go to London at once."

"No, no, don't leave me!" she cried,

sobbingly, clinging to him, a premonition of coming evil taking possession of her mind.

"Take me with you."

"Impossible, my love—my dearest wife. I will write," and pressing her against his breast with such passion and force that it almost rendered her senseless, he rushed from the room, and a few minutes later Jet saw him, mounted on Fidget, pass the window at a headlong pace.

Her heart sank as the fleet mare bore him out of sight. She felt that something terrible had occurred. She was right; they had had their summer, and the dreary winter day was coming fast and sure.

In a brilliantly-lighted room, in one of the best hotels in London, sat a woman, richly, even magnificently dressed, with a dark, handsome face, and a pair of bold, black eyes, which wandered restlessly to the clock, as though she was expecting someone.

"He is late," she muttered, at last. "Surely he won't dare to stay away."

Even as she spoke the door opened, and a man entered—a man with disordered dress and pallid face.

"So you have come, my beloved spouse," she questioned, mockingly, rising and facing him.

"So you are alive," he rejoined, his eyes fixed on her vividly-coloured face with a look of horror.

"Yes, alive—very much alive," she retorted, flippantly. "Not much to your satisfaction, I should say, from the look of you."

"Why did you deceive me? Why did you have news of your death sent to me?"

"That wasn't my fault. When you deserted me—left me to die like a dog in the streets of Montreal, some good Samaritan came across me, and took me to the hospital. I was ill there for months, and a woman in the next bed to mine died, and somehow or other they mixed us up, and word was sent to you that I was dead."

"Why did you not let me know the truth? What fiendish purpose had you in view?"

"None then," she replied, significantly. "Only I knew it was no use bothering myself about you. The game was up. You had no more money to spend, and you had grown to hate me. So I went back to the stage, and have managed to support myself since."

"Yes, and in what a style," he said, with cold contempt.

"No matter," she blazed out. "What is it to you? You didn't play the part of a loving husband, and stay by my side to watch and guard me, but—"

"You forget that you, having squandered my money and made me contemptible in the eyes of my brother officers, cared little for my 'regard and protection.' What has made you seek me out now?" he went on, drearily, "after twelve years."

"Can't you guess. Well, I'll tell you then. A month ago in Boston I came across an English paper some weeks old, and in it saw the death of Sir Roger, and the announcement that you came into the baronetcy and five thousand a-year. So like a dutiful wife I hurried across the Atlantic, and here I am, ready to share the money and the title with you."

"But you can't," he cried, wildly. "I am married again."

"I know, but that is nothing to me."

"It is everything to me."

"Possibly," she replied, coolly. "Yet you must get rid of your country wench Jet somehow or other."

"Don't you speak of her," he said, wrathfully. "Her name is polluted when mentioned by such lips as yours."

"Is it!" almost screamed the woman, her face purple with rage. "Is it, and why, pray? I am your lawful wife, and what is she but a—?"

"Stop!" he cried, fiercely, making a step towards her, a terrible look blazing in her eyes. "Stop! If you call her that I shall kill you!"

The woman blanched and cowed a little under his fierce look, but she recovered herself almost immediately, and said, sullenly,—
"It's what she is, though!"

With a groan Froom dropped into a chair, and buried his face in his arms. His love—his sweet wife—to be a mark for the finger of scorn to point at. And he—he who loved her so well, who would have given his heart's blood, his happiness, his life, to save her from an hour's trouble—had brought this shame on her innocent head!

"Ah!" said the woman, with a coarse laugh, as she saw him break down. "Ha! I can have my revenge now. You are a hard man, Laurence Froom; and you left me without mercy, without pity, when you found I wasn't quite what you thought me. I can reach you now through this woman you love, and make you feel. Eh!"

"Will nothing tempt you to leave me in peace, and spare the innocent child I have made my wife?" he asked, lifting his haggard face.

"Nothing!"

"I will give you a thousand a-year."

"No."

"Two?"

"No."

"Then what will you take?"

He rose in his eagerness, and went over to her, pleading for the woman he idolized and her fair fame, as he would never have pleaded for himself, even in the most dire necessity.

"Nothing!" she answered again, curtly, rising and shaking off the hand he laid on her arm. "Nothing—I tell you nothing! I am your wife—your lawful wife; and I claim my right to live with you, and share the five thousand a-year, and the title that old fool, your uncle, has left you."

"Fiend!" he hissed, his face black with passion, the great veins knotted and swollen on his temples.

"Fiend or no fiend I intend to be Lady Froom, and queen it at Froom Court, Laurence, my Laurence, my loving and dearly-loved husband!"

"Demon!" he cried, furiously, clenching his hands till the blood started under his nails. "Get out of my sight, or I shall murder you!"

"I am going, my love!" she replied, airily; "but please to remember that hard words break no bones, they only rile one rather. If I am much riled I shall bring a charge of bigamy against you, and then all the world will ring with the story of your *chère amie's* shame. If you take my advice," she went on, insolently, "you will pension off the country lass, and reinstate me in all my honours and dignities as quickly and quietly as possible. Then no one will hear of our little *affaire de cœur*. Good-bye, my love. You will find me here whenever you wish to come and see your adoring wife," and blowing him a kiss from the tips of her fingers, she passed out of the room.

"Oh, Heaven, help me!" cried Froom, in his awful anguish, for as the door closed on his wife's retreating form he knew that all hope for Jet was over—that her life was wrecked and spoiled, her happiness destroyed.

It was four o'clock on a February afternoon. All day long the wind had been blowing half a gale, accompanied by stiff gusts and snowsqualls. The meadows and trees about Holly-tree Farm were covered with a white pall, and the feathery powdery snow had whirled itself into wreaths and festoons about the old house, and had eddied and drifted into every nook and corner.

Jet stood by the window, gazing out at the wintry scene, listening to the shrill blast as it roared in the chimney, and whistled and wailed outside. A bright fire glowed in the grate, and threw ruddy gleams over the old spinet, the choice bits of Flight and Barr, the hideous china cows and shepherds, and played hide-and-seek amid the spindled legs of the antique little tables.

A great easy old-fashioned arm-chair was drawn before it, but it did not tempt Jet from

her post by the window. She was watching—watching for Froom's return. He had been away two whole days, and she had not had a single line from him. She could not understand it, and felt that some crisis was at hand; yet, like a true wife, hid her fears and misgivings from the old people, and pretended that she was quite satisfied and content. But as she gazed out over the snow-covered landscapes there was a dull pain gnawing at her heartstrings, a feeling of dread she could not banish or smother, and she started violently as the door opened, and Sukey's red head appeared round it.

"Muster Froom be int' garden-house," she announced, "and telled Jock to say he'd loike to see ye theer, ma'am."

"My husband!" gasped Jet, and seizing a wool shawl that lay on the sofa, she sprang through the door, out into the chill winter air, flying, rather than walking, across the few feet of ground that lay between the summer-house and the farm.

Froom was sitting by the little rough table as she entered, his head buried in his arms. He had sent to ask her to meet him there, thinking the awful news he had to tell would be better told out of the sight and hearing of the old people.

"Laurence!" she murmured, laying her hand on his arm. He had not heard the swish of her dress on the crisp snow, and was unconscious of her presence, but at the touch of her hand and the sound of her voice, he sprang to his feet and clasped her in his arms, holding her close to him as though he never meant to let her go again.

"Laurence, what is it?" she asked, looking up into his face, which was almost like that of a corpse in its ghastly pallor, and trembling as she saw the wild look of agony on it.

He tried to speak, but no words issued from his pale, blood-stained lips; only a mighty shudder ran through his frame and shook him from head to foot, and his eyes looked mute anguish into hers.

"Answer me, husband!" she implored.

Once more he tried to speak, once more his eyes met hers, and in them was a deep, unutterable pain for which his lips seemed to have no language. He only drew her down to a chair, and flung himself on his knees before her, hiding his face in her lap.

Silence reigned between them for a while, a silence to be remembered, it was so full of dread and misery. Outside the wind blew, and drove the fast-falling snow against the windows of the little gingerbread structure, yet its noise hardly dulled the loud beating of their hearts.

"Tell me, my beloved!" she cried at last, smoothing with caressing touch his ruffled, golden hair, "this silence tortures me."

With a dreadful moan he raised his head and looked at her.

"Speak!" she cried again, frantically, alarmed by the moan and the violent shivers that shook his strong frame.

"Jet," he whispered, hoarsely, then, "can you bear to hear something awful?"

"I can bear anything but this terrible suspense!"

"I have found," he went on, speaking slowly and heavily, "that some one, whom—I thought was dead—is—alive!"

"Who?" her lips just framed the word, no more.

"A woman—I—married more than twelve years ago!"

With a low cry, like some wounded animal, a cry that went through and through the heart of the wretched man kneeling before her, Jet flung up her arms. After a minute she said, in a curious, sobbing tone,—

"Go on."

"It is a miserable story," he continued, in a broken, disjointed way, his face half-hidden in the folds of her sweeping dress. "Just as I came of age my regiment was ordered out to Canada, and at Montreal I met a woman, then acting at the principal theatres. She was wonderfully handsome, in a dark, bold,

free style, and very fascinating. Night after night some fatal, irresistible power took me to the Queen's, and after awhile, Madame Vita noticed my absorbed gaze, and finding out from a brother officer that my father had left me five hundred a-year, and that I was heir presumptive to a baronetcy and five thousand a-year more, she manoeuvred to bring about the introduction that quickly followed, and to mesh me in her toils.

"After a while, alas! she succeeded only too well. I became infatuated; was never happy out of her society; spent immense sums of money on her, and, at last, yielding to her prayers and entreaties, in a fatal, mad moment, married her. Of what followed after—the misery, disgrace, shame—I can hardly speak! Soon, only too soon, I found the woman I had thought so deeply in love with me—so honourable, so talented—was an adventuress of the lowest type, and a fiend in female form! Her extravagance was unbounded; in a short time I was deeply in debt, and to clear myself had to sell the estate my father left me, to my mother's great astonishment, for I had carefully concealed my miserable marriage from her, and determined nothing should ever make me reveal it to her. After the money from the sale of that had been dissipated by the wretch I called wife, she suddenly left me.

"Disgusted beyond measure, weary of life, my profession everything, I sold out of the army and took a passage for England. The day before I left Montreal, she accosted me in the street. She had come down from New York to try and induce me to take her back. But my horror and disgust were too great to allow of my having anything more to do with her; so, giving her the last five-pound note I possessed, I left her and returned to England to my mother, who was living at Froom Court with Sir Roger. After a while he allowed me three hundred a-year, and I spent a good deal of my time travelling, trying to forget the miserable past; and so my life went on for ten years till my mother died, and then to my joy, I heard that Vita was dead."

"And—and she wasn't?"

Jet's voice sounded faint and far away.

"Alas! no, my dearest. Another woman in the hospital, very like her, died at that time, and they got confused about it in some unaccountable way, and gave out that Madame Vita was dead. So when I sent out to Canada about it they assured me positively that she had died, and, as she had gone to Australia, of course there was no trace of her in America. It was only hearing that I had come into the baronetcy and the estates that made her come to England and claim her right to share it with me. Would that I had never come into it," he went on, despairingly; "but for it she would never have sought me out, and you and I could have been happy for ever together."

"Can we not be happy now, Laurence?"

"I fear not, darling," he replied, reluctantly.

"Why not? You can divorce her."

"I am afraid I can't. She can bring a counter-charge of bigamy against me. We must wait patiently till she dies, Jet; I will marry you the moment the breath is out of her body. I can only save you, and keep the whole affair from being made public by letting her share the title, and live at Froom Court, and squander the money. I have had the best legal advice during these two wretched days I have spent in London, and I see no other way of saving you. After inquiry I find that she has been careful to do nothing that will enable me to take proceedings for a divorce."

"Then—I am—not—your wife?" said the poor girl, despairingly.

"My dearest—only in the sight of Heaven."

"And my child?" she asked, with a terrible, low, moaning cry.

"Your child?" he repeated, in surprise. Then, seeing her meaning, he cried, in a voice of exceeding anguish, "Great Heavens! Jet, is it so? Heaven help us, then, I cannot save you from the world's scorn! My love! my

love! can you ever forgive me the shame and sorrow I have brought on you? You, whom I adore—who are all the world to me—whom I would have died for gladly—say you forgive me, my dearest!"

He took the little blue-veined icy hands in his, and clasped them fondly, looking up into the sweet face he loved so well.

She only shivered at his touch, and tried feebly to draw them away.

"Forgive me?" he cried again. "Say you forgive me, Jet, or I shall go mad!"

"Yes—yes—I forgive you," she said, in a slow, curious way, as she rose from the chair and drew the crimson shawl round her. "Good-bye now—I am going to Aunt Bab."

"I shall come with you."

"No—no—you must not come," she whispered, fearfully, looking at him with wildly dilated eyes.

"Why not? Surely you will not send me from you now, after what you have told me?"

"I must. You are not my husband. Go back to your wife—to the—woman that claims you."

"Jet, you are cruel; I will not leave you."

"Laurence—Laurence—you must," she sobbed, wringing her hands, and looking at him like some poor hunted fawn—the terrible anguish of a hunted creature driven to bay, in her great, sad eyes.

The look touched him. He crushed down his own mad longing to be with her, and soothed her tenderly, saying—

"It shall be as you wish, darling. I will not force myself on you if you don't like it."

"It is not that, Laurence," she answered, wearily; "you know I love you better than life. But I dare not see you now—you—another woman's husband! Oh, Heaven! it would be sin. It will kill me!"

And she tottered and awayed for a moment like a reed in the blast.

"My darling, do not think of it," he said, anxiously, looking at the ashy, drawn face, paler by contrast against the deep crimson shawl. "You shall go at once to Aunt Bab. One kiss, love," and he drew her back into his arms, and, for a moment, clung to her with desperate fondness; then, opening the door, he let her pass out, watching the slight figure going slowly and unsteadily over the snow-covered earth. As she reached the farm he turned, and, flinging himself on the damp, cold floor, sobbed as only a strong man can, cursing himself and the infamous woman he had married for bringing such grief and shame on to the innocent head of the girl he worshipped.

"What did thy husband want with thee, lass?" queried the old farmer, as Jet reached the cosy room where Aunt Bab and her uncle were sitting before a blazing fire.

"Husband?" she answered, vacantly, pressing her hands to her temple.

"Yes, thy husband. Sukey told me he had come back, and wanted to see thee in the garden-house. What is it all about that thy husband can't come here to speak to thee?"

"Husband!" she repeated, "I have no husband!" and, with a low moan, she fell senseless at his feet, and lay prone along the red brick floor, the firelight dancing and flickering over her ghastly face and dusky hair.

CHAPTER VI.

For nearly three months after that dreadful day, when Jet found she was no wife, she was partially insensible to all her misery. Brain fever for a time robbed her of her senses, and kept from her the knowledge of her wrecked life, her cruelly crushed hopes.

"The earth was waking at the voice of May. The new grass brightened by the trodden way. The woods waved welcome to the sweet spring day."

ere the invalid was brought down, and laid on the great chintz-covered sofa in the cosy parlour at Hollytree Farm.

It had been a fearful time for the two old people who were so bound up in the young

girl's life, and they showed it. Aunt Bab's hair was silvery white, and Uncle Nat's ruddy face was lined and careworn. The knowledge that their niece was no wife struck a terrible blow at the old man's pride.

Aunt Bab thought more of the girl's sorrow and cared less about the opinion of their little world; but her husband was furious against Froom, and at first would not let him over the threshold, even when Jet's life was despaired of; and the wretched young man wandered about like an unquiet spirit, watching the window of the room in which she lay, and waiting eagerly for Linthorpe, who proved himself a friend indeed to Laurence in his misery, and who was invaluable at Hollytree Farm in such a crisis.

"How is she?" Laurence would ask, as the other came out, his hungry eyes devouring his face for tidings.

"A little better—a little worse—or, just the same!" George would answer, according as the invalid varied.

"You had better come up to Blue Ash and stay there with me," he said one day to Laurence. "Mr. Trevor will never let you live again under the same roof with Jet, and it only angers him to see you about here. I will try and reason with him on the subject, and make him see things in a truer light."

And so a cart came down from Blue Ash, and all Laurence's things were put in it, and he, gratefully accepting the young farmer's offer, went to stay with him.

After a time Aunt Bab and Linthorpe prevailed upon Uncle Nat to see that Froom was more sinned against than sinning, and to let him come to Hollytree Farm; and every day Laurence would come down and sit for a while in the room where Jet lay listening to her senseless babbling, or kneel beside her bed praying for the life of the woman he loved.

"He shan't come here when she recovers her senses," said Trevor, savagely, when he heard his niece was out of immediate danger. "He's a scoundrel!"

"Nat, dear, he is not!" expostulated Aunt Bab, gently.

She saw the grey hairs that mingled thickly with the golden curls, the deep lines about the mouth, the look of unutterable anguish in the blue eyes, and with a woman's keen penetration knew how much he suffered, though he was so silent, and spoke little of his remorse and undying regret.

"No, he is certainly not a scoundrel," chimed in George, who always stood up for Laurence, and would have done anything for the man Jet loved. "He thought the woman was dead. I know he would rather have cut his right hand off than have married Jet had he known his wife lived. As to his coming here, Mr. Trevor, surely that must depend upon your niece; if she—"

"He shan't come here, I tell you," shouted the old man, stubbornly.

"Surely, if she asks for him you will let her see him; you will not refuse her that small consolation?" said Linthorpe, his voice full of emotion. "Poor child! she has suffered so much, we must not deny her anything. Then think how he loves her; no one has ever—could ever love her so well," he went on, loyal to the core to the man he had vowed to befriend. "You will let her see him if she wishes it?"

"Well, then—yes, if she asks for him," consented the old man, softening.

But Jet did not ask for him. She would lie all day long on the great old-fashioned sofa, looking out of the open window at the trim garden; with its mass of bluish-pink chinas roses, its blue-eyed myosotis, sweet-scented syringas, and shapely asphodels, gazing away into the distance, beyond the cowslip-bordered meadows, with a dreamy look in her sad eyes. A shadow—verily, a shadow of the old Jet of a few short months ago.

She seemed to take no interest in life. Stabby-tailed Boots would lie for hours at her feet unnoticed, Daisy was never inquired after, or S-i-o-b, or any of her old pets. She

was always gentle and lovable, but took interest in nothing.

In vain Linthorpe tried to rouse her out of the apathy that possessed her. She would listen to all he said, and then with a wistful smile turn away her head and gaze out into space.

It pained the honest young fellow terribly to see her so gentle, so resigned to her unhappy fate.

"Jet," he cried, one day, when the June roses were flowing and the note of the nightingale rang through the larch spinney, his love getting the better of his self-control, "Jet, you are not happy?"

"No," she replied; "I never can be happy again."

"You think too much of the past."

"Yes, the shadow and the shame of it are always with me."

"Don't think of it!" he implored. "Let me make a future for you. I will marry you to-morrow if you'll have me?"

"No, George," she answered gently, "I could not let you marry a woman, wretched and shame-stricken as I am."

"But I will turn your shame, as you term it, into honour. You shall be my honoured, adored wife."

"No—no. It cannot be."

"Don't send me from you!" he pleaded earnestly. "I will sell Blue Ash; we will go abroad. I can get a farm at Manitoba or the Transvaal, and I will devote my life to trying to make you happy, and forget the past."

"Dear George," she answered, deeply moved, "I could not accept the sacrifice. Some day you will meet a sweet, innocent girl, who will be your wife and make you happy."

"Never—never!" he cried, with a sob, as he dropped on his knees beside her. "There is only one woman in the world for me—you are she. I can never care for any other."

"Listen, Jet," he went on after a minute, shading his face with his broad-leaved felt hat, "Be my wife only in name. I know how you love him, and I will not ask a wife's affection from you. Only take my name; let me shelter you and your child from the harsh sneers of an uncharitable world. He will understand, I have spoken to him about it, and will give you to me."

"Thank you from the depths of my heart, for your noble offer," she answered gratefully, a little wistful smile on the poor wan face, so pathetic with its meek expression of resignation, "Yet I cannot accept it. In the sight of Heaven I am his wife, and can never take another man's name. As you say, he knows, he will, I am sure, appreciate your generosity, but I could not link my ruined life with yours."

"Will nothing I say move you—nothing make you alter your decision?"

"Nothing, dear George," she replied firmly, "Heaven bless you though, for your generosity and kindness towards me."

"And Heaven bless you, Jet, and comfort you and sustain you in your trials," and he broke down, sobbing bitterly.

Rushing from the room he sprang on his horse, and rode off at a furious pace, dashing the tears from his eyes as he went. And they were no shame to his manhood; they were shed for the wrecked life of the creature he loved better than aught else in the world.

The long summer days wore on, and slowly but surely Jet grew weaker and weaker. She seldom lifted her head from the chintz-covered pillow; her life seemed slipping silently away.

"Aunt," she said, suddenly, one sultry August afternoon, as the reapers passed along the road by the farm, singing on their homeward way. "Where is Laurence?"

"Up at Blue Ash, staying with the Linthorpes."

"Has he been there ever since—since—?"

"Yea, dearie; these six months."

"May I see him, aunt? I don't think I can live much longer now," and she held up a

little, transparent hand, wofully thin, and wasted. "It can't be very wrong to see him just once, to say good-bye!"

"Don't talk like that, dearie!" said the old woman, with a smothered sob. "Of course you shall see him. I will send off Jack this minute."

Jet sank back among her pillows as Aunt Bab left the room, and shut her eyes, hoping that she might sleep, and so pass the time that must elapse ere Laurence could join her.

Something, however, impelled her to open them again and look up the road that wound down the hill-side from Blue Ash. A horseman was coming along at a furious pace. On—on he came. Nearer—nearer. His horse's hoofs thundered on the road. She recognized him—it was Laurence!

She clasped her hands over her heart to still its beating. What could he be coming for, she wondered. Aunt Bab's messenger had not left the farm. She could see him distinctly, the white, worn face; the bright, golden hair.

"My love!" she murmured, softly.

Another moment, he was at the gate; another, and he strode into the quaint old parlour. Weak as she was, Jet rose as he entered and threw herself on to his breast, while he snatched her in his arms, and held her pressed closely against him, as though he would never lose her again, while his passionate lips pressed kisses on her cheek and brow.

"My dearest," he said, at last, drawing her down beside him on the sofa, "how I have longed for this moment; longed through all these dreary months to see your sweet face once again!" and he bent his head and kissed her throat, to hide the tears that welled thickly to his eyes as he noted her changed appearance. "Have you forgiven me, love, that I so unwittingly brought sorrow on your dear head?"

"Forgiven you! Oh, Laurence, need you ask?"

"I should not have dared to come to you now," he went on, "but I have good news. Can you bear the shock of a great surprise?"

"Yes," she answered, sadly, "I can bear anything now."

"Then—I am free now!"

"Free, Laurence?" she gasped.

"Yes, free. The wretched creature I thought myself bound to is dead; and you are my own dear wife!"

"How!" asked Jet, faintly, her eyes fixed on his face, with a bewildered look in them.

"She was married, two years before I met her, to an American, who, through her instrumentality, was wrongfully sent to twenty years penal servitude for a forgery and robbery of which she was guilty. He escaped from prison a few months ago, and tracked her to England. Finding she was living at the Countess's wife, he went to her and threatened to reveal her secret unless she gave him a large sum of money. She jeered and defied him, telling him to do his worst; and he, desperate, starving, maddened by the memory of his wrongs and her treachery, drew a pistol and shot her dead!"

"Oh! Laurence, how terrible!"

"Terrible, indeed, my dearest! And yet the awful deed has brought to light her secret, and we need never part again." And he drew her head down to his breast, its rightful resting-place, and soothed her with tender endearments.

Three months later there were grand doings at Froom Court on the occasion of the christening of Sir Laurence Froom's infant son. Triumphant arches were raised, decked with holly and ivy; bells rang out joyful peals; the tenantry were feasted in the park-like grounds that surrounded the house; barrels of beer were broached, and alep roasted whole, and the village lads and lasses danced in a great tent that had been erected for them right merrily; while at the Countess's large party of Sir Laurence and Lady Froom's friends gathered to do honour to the young heir.

"Are you happy, Jet?" asked her husband,

fondly, after all their guests had departed, and they stood together by the cradle of their child. "Does the present joy atone for the past sorrow?"

"More than atones," she answered, softly. "I am more than happy. I shall have my paradise now on earth."

And Laurence, as he clasped his love in his strong arms, and kissed her fair face, felt that she spoke truly; felt that it lay in his power to guard her from all earthly ills, and make her life one long dream of love and happiness.

[THE END.]

FACETIE.

They were speaking of a certain lady who sings beautifully, and one of the party asked, "Is she a mezzo-soprano?" "No, I think she is a Swede," was the innocent reply.

Judge not by appearances. A woman can carry a pocket-book in her hand just as proudly when it only contains two tram-car tickets and a latch-key as when it is full of cash.

The late Baron de Rothschild once took a cab to his office, and on alighting tendered the proper fare. The cabman received it, but kept his hand open, and looked at the money significantly, which caused the baron to inquire whether it was not right. "Oh yes," replied the cabman, "it's quite right, but your sons usually give me double." "They do, do they?" was the baron's reply; "well they have a rich father, and can afford it; I have not."

CHARLES II. offered a reward to any one who could find a rhyme to "porringer." Some man claimed the reward on producing these lines:

"The Duke of York a daughter had,
He gave the Prince of Orange her;
So now your Majesty will see
We have a rhyme to porringer."

"Now I want to know," said a man whose veracity had been questioned by an angry acquaintance, "just why you call me a liar. Be frank, sir; for frankness is a golden-trimmed virtue. Just as a friend, now tell me why you called me a liar!" "Well, I called you a liar because you are a liar," the acquaintance replied. "That is what I call frankness. Why, sir, if this rule was adopted, over half of the difficulties would be settled without trouble, and in our case there would have been trouble but for our willingness to meet each other halfway."

TOMPKINS AS A JURYMAN.—"The idea of putting John on a jury!" exclaimed Mrs. Tompkins, when she heard that her husband had been drawn. "They might as well order a new trial right off. They won't get John to agree on a verdict. He is the most obstinate man I ever saw. I never knew him to agree with his own wife in anything, and it isn't at all likely he's going to agree with people he doesn't know anything about. A pretty juryman he is!"

AN AMBIGUOUS ANGLER.—There is a story told of a gentleman who obtained a day's fishing on some neighbouring water, who, after preparing himself very liberally for the sport with a new rod, reel, cork, fly-book, &c., all of the best, went gaily with the keeper to the fray. On that particular piece of water which he had to fish there were a good many trees, and, in fact, the best water had to be fished from a covert which, having been cut down two years before, was now all shoots and growers at least as high as one's waist. At first the gentleman lost a few flies and laughed; then he lost more and swore—he was a hot-tempered man; and in time he grew purple and absolutely raved with unholly wrath, until a sudden cold came over him, during which, with an evil smile on his face, he deliberately smashed his new rod over his knee, and chucking it, his fly-book and everything else, into the river, with a "There! dash you, take your choice," to the fish, and a guinea tip to the keeper, turned on his heel and abjured fishing for ever.

A SOCIETY MISS makes a hit if her father is rich.

Positive, wait; comparative, wait; superlative, go and get it yourself.

Light-houses, from a theatrical point of view, always indicate breakers ahead.

WOMAN'S love for ribbon is pardonable, since she owes her existence to a rib bone.

"Now that I have got my hay in," said the relieved farmer, "I think the world would be greatly better for a good shower."

Many a man thinks he is a light in his society world, when, in fact, he is only a light-weight.

"EMILIE," asks the teacher, "which animal attaches himself the most to man?" Emilie (after some reflection): "The leech, sir."

"Did the prisoner knock Mr. Smith down in retaliation?" asked the lawyer of the witness. "No, sir; he knocked him down in the yard."

I NEVER loved but one person," sighed Biggs. "And as a man cannot marry himself," remarked Fogg, "of course it came to nothing." Poor fellow!

"PLEASE to give me something, sir?" says an old woman. "I had a blind child; he was my only means of subsistence, and the poor boy has recovered his sight!"

PROFESSOR (looking at his watch): "As we have a few minutes, I shall be glad to answer any question that any one may wish to ask." Student—"What time is it, please?"

They thought they heard burglars in the house, last week, and, in going downstairs to investigate, Bibbs said to his wife: "You go first; it's a mean man that would about a woman."

JOHNIE HAD IT.—Colonel Baumgardner got up one morning worse mixed up than were the drinks he had taken the night before. When he was ready to start on his usual cocktail expedition, he cried: "Marler, where's my hat?" "I don't know, dear, unless Johnnie has it." "Well, and what the dickens is he doing with it?" "I don't know; but he said he wanted a brick to sharpen the knives on, and I told him to look in your hat; he would be likely to find one there." The colonel wore his last summer straw hat down-town.

TEST OF CAPACITY.—"I remember," says a correspondent, "once breakfasting with M. Thiers. There were six perfects at table. Cod was served. M. Thiers took a large plateful. He then took the oil-cruet, and poured nearly the whole of the contents over the cod. I was alarmed at seeing an old man preparing to eat such a dish, and could not refrain from asking whether he was not afraid of doing himself some harm. 'No, no,' he replied. 'I want to show these gentlemen that I am capable of governing, because I have an easy digestion.'"

ENIGMA OF PHOTOGRAPHS.—Niece: "Aunt, dear, the young artist Herr Schmidt again entreated me at the ball last evening to lend him my photograph, which, he says, will be of inestimable value to him in painting his new picture. He promises to return it as soon as the picture is finished. May I give it to him?"—Aunt: "Well, I think it will be all right if you enclose with it a picture of your mother, or some elderly person; to send your picture alone would be a terrible breach of etiquette."

At a masked ball in Berlin, Germany, not long ago, a certain young gentleman was quite fascinated with the grace and conversation of a closely-masked incognito, and at last begged for the privilege of continuing the acquaintance elsewhere. The lady agreed, and designated a piano concert the next evening as the rendezvous, telling him to be in one of the front rows. Soon after he heard her whisper to an elderly lady: "Such luck! I have given a rendezvous to fifty different gentlemen as my concert to-morrow night. Fifty reserve seats will more than pay my expenses, and every one else who comes is clear gain."

SOCIETY.

The Queen will not return to Windsor until the third or fourth week in November, unless the weather should set in with exceptional severity. Her Majesty is proof against cold, the densest Scotch mist having but little effect upon her health; but as Princess Beatrice suffered so recently from rheumatism, it is not probable that the stay of the Court at Balmoral will be prolonged at any risk of a return of this inconvenient and painful ailment to her Royal Highness. Lately the Queen has been taking long drives in company with the Empress Eugénie and Princess Beatrice. Her Majesty continues in excellent health.

A HANDSOME gold bracelet has been presented to Lady Napier of Magdala by the ladies of Gibraltar, in token of their "regard and affection," and in recognition of the hospitable reception universally accorded by Lord and Lady Napier of Magdala to all who entered the doors of "the Convent." The bracelet consists of a massive gold band, with Lady Napier's monogram and coronet in brilliant and pearls.

The inaugurating of the Ben Nevis Observatory was largely attended, especially by ladies, several of whom performed the fatiguing uphill expedition to the summit, where they partook of breakfast; afterwards a grand banquet was held in the evening in the Caledonian Hotel, Fort William, and the town was illuminated.

The marriage of the year took place on Saturday, the 27th October. Lady Maud Cecil, the daughter of the great Conservative Marquis, being on that day united in the bonds to the son and heir of the Lord Chancellor. The arrival of Mr. Gladstone in town late on Wednesday was at first attributed to the fact that he intended honouring his Chancellor with his presence, and this turned out to be the case. The wedding was also attended by some of the most eminent members of both political parties.

The dessert service of Derby china which the working men of the county town have subscribed for as a gift to the Premier, will be finished by the end of next month. The set will be a masterpiece of its kind, and will show in a marked manner that the hand of the local china-worker has not yet lost its cunning. The flowers are the work of James Rorer, whose delicate touch is to be seen on some of the best samples of "Old Derby." The views, of which there will be more than twenty—including Chatsworth, Hardwick Hall, Wingfield Manor, and Haddon Hall—are by Count Holsendorf, who has made studies from nature. It is probable that the presentation will be made in London during the first week in December.

SIR PATRICK BLAKE, Bart., of Bardwell, Suffolk, and Miss Emma Gertrude Pilkington Dawson, only daughter of the late Mr. T. Pilkington Dawson, of Groton House, Suffolk, were married by special licence at St. Peter's Church, Eaton-Square, on the 18th Oct. The bride wore a bodice and train of white brocade satin over a skirt of ottoman silk, trimmed with large chenille balls and lace. A few small sprays of orange blossoms were placed about the bodice and in her hair, which was covered by a long tulle veil; her bouquet was of white roses. The bridesmaids wore tasteful costumes; the skirts were of satin, design being large pale-coloured cherries on a cream-coloured ground, and the bodice and drapery were of cream nun's veiling, the basques being cut out in square tabs and filled in thickly with lace; the fronts of the skirts were trimmed with wide lace in a similar manner, and were edged underneath with kiltings of nun's veiling. Their small drawn bonnets were made of lace, and ornamented with cherries, a bunch of which was also placed at the neck. All carried bouquets of large double geraniums.

STATISTICS.

JUDICIAL STATISTICS.—The judicial statistics for England and Wales for the year 1882, including returns relating to the police, criminal proceedings, prisons, equity, common law, and civil and canon law, have just been issued in the form of a Blue-book. The returns for 1881-82 show a slight decrease in the total number of the criminal classes at large and known to the police, as compared with the numbers in 1880-81. In the number of persons summarily proceeded against before justices there is an increase of 47,241, or 7.0 per cent, and in the commitments to prison, as shown in the prison tables, there is an increase of 969, or 0.49 per cent. The number of convictions for murder in 1882 was 29; in 1881 the number was 23. The total police and constabulary force was 33,173, showing an increase of 1,141 upon the previous year. The total number gives one constable for every 782 of the population according to the census of 1881, while the total number in 1873 gave one for every 831 of the population for that year. The number of appeals against the decisions of justices in summary proceedings in the year was 151, the convictions being affirmed in 79 cases, the remainder being quashed. During the year 27,513 inquests were held on 18,678 male and 8,840 female bodies. The number of persons tried for criminal offences during the year was 15,260, of whom 11,699 were found guilty. The total cost of the trial of prisoners on indictment was £115,263. The number of prisoners in the Government local prisons during the year was 189,524, while that of those in the different convict prisons was 12,171.

GEMS.

'Tis a strange truth that only in the agony of parting do we look into the depths of love.

Nothing has ever remained of any revolution but what was ripe in the conscience of the masses.

We must not roughly smash other people's idols because we know, or think we know, that they are of cheap human manufacture.

Give me the benefit of your convictions, if you have any, but keep your doubts to yourself, for I have enough of my own.

Never accuse a child of a fault unless you are certain he committed it. Children should not be treated with suspicion. We should act towards them in this matter as we feel we ought to act towards others, only with greater tenderness—not less, as is usually done.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

A PIE OF COED ROAST MEAT AND APPLES.—Cut some apples into quarters, and take out the core—preserving the pipes and sticking them into the pulp; cut thick slices of cold fat bacon, and any sort of cold roasted meat; season with pounded ginger, pepper and salt. Put into the dish a layer of each, and pour over the top a large cupful of ale. Cover the dish with paste, and bake until nicely browned.

COLD-SLOUGH.—Cut a head of hard white cabbage into very fine shavings: it is seldom shaved fine enough. For a quart of the cabbage, take the yolks of three eggs; beat them well; stir into a tumbler and a half of vinegar two spoonfuls of hot sugar, a tablespoonful of olive-oil, one of thick sweet cream, or a piece of butter as large as a walnut, a heaped teaspoonful of mustard, salt and pepper to taste; mix with the egg, and put this sauce into a stewpan; when hot, add the cabbage; stew until thoroughly hot, which will only require four or five minutes. Toss it up from the bottom with a silver or wooden fork; take it up and set where it will become perfectly cold—on ice is best. The quantity of vinegar would depend upon its strength.

MISCELLANEOUS.

FOOLISH DISCUSSIONS.—Discussions of all kinds are foolish, but theological arguments are worse than any. They do very little good, and generally end in the loss of temper on both sides. The verb to discuss is an ominous verb, because after a short time the first syllable is dropped and the talk is continued under the last syllable. Two very able persons were once indulging in a controversy of this kind, when a huge dog which was one of the company began to bark furiously. A third person who had listened until his patience was quite exhausted turned to the dog and said with evident sarcasm, "Shut up, you brute; you don't know any more about the subject than they do."

WOMEN IN ICELAND.—The Icelandic women have preserved the national characteristics of their dress for many hundred years. That for ordinary wear consists of a plain woollen material, the waist made somewhat like a vest. From a stiff cap worn a little to one side hangs a black silk tassel, reaching to the shoulder, bound in the middle with a metal band. The full dress is more elaborate, the neck band, sleeves and front down to the waist being ornamented with beads and filigree work in gold and silver, with a broad belt of metal plates hinged together, frosted and engraved, and having pendant ornaments very much resembling those worn in America today. The "faldr" (headress) made of stiff white muslin, high and projecting in front, with a white veil dependent from the back and reaching to the ground, completes the costume of an Icelandic lady on high occasions.

FASCINATION.—A plain woman can never be pretty. She can be fascinating if she takes pains. "I well remember a man," says a lady, "who was a great admirer of our sex telling me that one of the most fascinating women he had ever known was not only not pretty, but, as to her face, decidedly plain—ugly, only the word is rude. I asked my friend, 'How, then did she fascinate?' I well remember his reply: 'Her figure was neat, her dress was faultless, her every movements was graceful, her conversation was clever and animated, and she always tried to please. It was not I alone who called her fascinating; she was one of the most acceptable women in society I ever knew. She married brilliantly, and her husband, a lawyer in large practice, was devoted to her more than if she had been a queen of beauties.' Here was a woman who, excepting a fairly neat figure, had not a single natural gift of appearance. Is not this worth thinking of—those of us women who care to please and are not beauties born?"

OLD WORLD HOUSEHOLD CUSTOMS.—In ancient Egypt, when a cat died in the house, the inhabitants shaved their eyebrows; if a dog died they shaved their whole body. In Athens one of the laws of Triptolemus declared that no one had a right to inflict a wrong upon a living creature. The Greeks were aware of the tender and affectionate care which the young of the stork exhibited for their old parents, and recorded that, when the latter lost their feathers from age, the young stripped themselves of their down for them, and fed them with the food they collected. This was the origin of the Greek law called "The law of the stork," by virtue of which children were obliged to take care of their aged parents, and children who refused to do so were declared infamous.

CARE OF CANARIES.—Canaries should never be exposed to draughts of air in doors or out, nor should they hang in the sun as a rule. If out-of-doors they require a warm, dry, sheltered, shady place. The only food made of flour given them should be biscuits or dried bread. New or warm bread or biscuits are not good for either a bird or a person to eat. If the birds are infested with mites cover the top of the cage with a piece of white flannel at night, and early in the morning take it off and shake over a hot stove. The mites, instead of hiding about the cold wires of the cage, will seek cloth, and may be captured.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. B. S.—The 3rd of November, 1884, was a Sunday.
BROWN JUV.—1. The 30th June, 1841, fell on a Wednesday. 2. Fair writing.

C. B. S.—A will does not require any stamp, but a deed does, and the amount depends upon its nature.

R. S. T.—The meaning of heliotrope in the language of flowers is "I remain true to you."

AGUS.—The "Hallelujah Chorus" is by George Frederick Handel, and forms the conclusion of the Messiah.

HEART OF OAK.—As we have frequently stated before we do not insert matrimonial advertisements of any kind.

S. L. V. P.—The sentence "*Nous avons changé tout cela*" means "we have altered all that," referring to political reforms.

ANXIOUS ONE.—It is no doubt the mother's doings. Find out the young lady's address, and learn from her own lips whether she cares for you or not.

EPFA.—Have medical advice about the child at once. Croup is far too serious a disease to be treated by household remedies.

HARRY F.—Your sister had no right to interfere in the matter, and you would be very foolish to take any notice of what she says.

K. L.—The English admiral employed to carry Napoleon to St. Helena was Sir George Cockburn. He died August 19, 1855.

S. W.—We have no personal knowledge of any place where you would be likely to dispose of the instrument, nor can we form any opinion of its value.

BELLA W.—He evidently wants to scrape an acquaintance with you, but is probably too timid to make the first advance.

S. V. R.—You are not in any way liable. It has been judicially decided that if a man is in debt and difficulties himself he cannot be compelled to support his aged mother.

DORA V.—Your lover is in earnest, and no doubt extremely fond of you, as his close attention shows, but he is probably timid, not to say bashful. Give him a little encouragement.

JENNY JUNE.—It is entirely a matter of individual taste, but the more appropriate present for a young lady would, in our opinion, be something to wear, say a silk tie or a bit of jewellery.

C. S. B.—Put the letter on the fire and forget all about it. If the writer has not the malice to avow his or her name while making so grave a charge, depend upon it there is very little evidence for it.

O. R.—September 26th 1855, fell upon Tuesday; January 29th, 1855, upon Sunday; December 26th, 1859, upon Monday; and December 25th, 1861, upon Wednesday.

G. F.—You could probably make a much better living at dressmaking and millinery than by drawing and painting. Besides, the former is much easier to learn than the latter.

K. L.—In such a dilemma, it would be well to get married as soon as possible. This will stop foolish flirting on the part of your betrothed. He should be above such trifling.

J. M. H.—You cannot legally marry again unless your husband is dead, but not having heard from or seen him for fourteen years if you were to marry again you would not be punished for bigamy.

C. V.—The best way would be for the young man to make a visit to the young lady's parents. He could then tell whether he liked her or not; and if he did like her, he could arrange for a correspondence.

V. P.—You had better postpone making any engagement until you are quite ready to marry. No man should visit a young lady and win her love until he has the means and the desire to marry.

J. N. M.—The quotation "Procrastination is the thief of time," occurs in Young's "Night Thoughts." "Love me little love me long," occurs in an old ballad.

DAISY.—1. If the young men do shun the young lady on such trivial grounds they must be a very callous, hard-hearted set. 2. Seventeen is early; let it be for a year or two, when you will know your own mind better. 3. Very bright auburn; a handsome colour.

UNSETTLED ONE.—It is rather a cool request on the part of the young man, but he must really care for you or he would not make it, especially after being snubbed the first time. The thing for you to consider is whether you care enough for him to marry him.

S. K. R.—Perhaps if you should visit your sister at the school, you could influence her to stop the correspondence. If she should not listen to you, it would be your duty then to tell your parents, and let them take such a course as should to them seem best.

K. L.—1. Your parents have no right to ask you to break your solemn engagement with your betrothed, and you would show yourself very weak and unjust if you allowed the offences of others to change your feelings towards one who had no part in them. Remember,

however, that you should show every respect to your parents, and that in future years it will be a great happiness to you, if by any amount of forbearance and gentleness, you can overcome their opposition to your marriage. 2. An oath, like every promise, when made with a full understanding of its meaning, and when it does not bind you to do anything absolutely wrong, should be kept at all risks.

L. R.—1. The groom usually gives his intended bride a list of his friends whom he wishes to be invited to the wedding, and invitations are sent to them just as though they were friends of the bride. 2. No. The groom's parents are not supposed to have anything to do with the ceremony. 3. The bride's friends are invited by her parents, whether they are personally known to the parents or not.

W. T.—It would be a kindness to such a young man to point out to him clearly and forcibly the rudeness and boorishness of his conduct. He should as a matter of course have removed his hat when saying good evening to the ladies, and then, if he did not wish to sit with his head uncovered, he could have asked leave to put on his hat, which would of course be granted. Putting the feet up in the air against a pillar would not be tolerated in any respectable society.

R. M.—Anyone with a strong taste for mathematics could learn algebra from a book without a teacher, but he would lose much time over difficulties which a few words of explanation would remove at once. On the other hand, he would find that the struggle to overcome his difficulties, unless so hard as to discourage him altogether, would leave him stronger and better fitted to cope with others as they arose. You can get good algebras from any bookseller who deals in schoolbooks.

"A GENTLE, LOVING WIFE."

How sweet at night to sit me down,
Beside a gentle, loving wife,
And in my heart's dreary trials own
A helpmeet to each shade of life.

Her love can smooth the troubled way.
Her tenderness bids care depart;
Her smiles enhance the darkest day,
And make a sunshine to the heart.

She is a guard against despair,
She is a hope in time of ill.
She is a pearl of priceless wear,
A lasting joy our life to fill.

G. V.

F. M.—Nova Scotia is a province of the dominion of Canada. The capital, commercial metropolis, and largest city is Halifax. The climate is remarkably healthy. The weather, though variable, is considered preferable to most other parts of Canada. After the close of the American Revolution, large numbers of royalist refugees from the United States settled in Nova Scotia, and their descendants now form a large portion of the population.

G. W. S.—The quotation, "Comparisons are odious," is found in Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy," in Donne's "Elegy 8," in George Herbert's "Aguila Prodentium," and in Heywood's, "A Woman Killed With Kindness." As all these authors were contemporary with Shakespeare it is fair to conclude that the phrase was as familiar then as now, and then when Shakespeare makes Dogberry say, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, "Comparisons are odious," he was but quoting a quotation which even then had grown tiresome by repetition.

ELLA.—The lines you refer to are by Thomas Gray. They occur in a poem entitled, "On a Distant Prospect of Eton College." We quote from the 10th stanza, which makes their meaning obvious:—

"Yet, ah! why should they know their fate,
Since sorrow never comes too late,
And happiness too swiftly flies?
Thought would destroy their paradise.
No more;—where Ignorance is bliss,
'Tis folly to be wise."

R. D.—You would be very foolish to let the fact that you are three years older than your lover stand between you and happiness. In some of the happiest marriages we have known the wife has been older than the husband. It is very much against your other lover that he has engaged himself several times to marry women whom he did not really love. Why should you think that he is more in earnest than he? Your writing is bad, but you can improve it by regularly copying good hand-lines, and by exercising care whenever you write.

W. K. L.—A young lady, who was not seriously offended by her lover showing her letters, even to her father, would be very different from most of her sex. Of course it was right that her father should know of the engagement, and her refusal to allow the engagement to be announced would naturally arouse some suspicion in the mind even of the most trusting lover, but the state of things could not be improved by his taking the matter into his own hands, especially in the way was done in this case. No man may be found to lose altogether a high-spirited girl.

R. T. D.—1. It may not be actually incorrect to say, "There are plenty of mistakes," but it is certainly very inelegant. We should only speak of "plenty" of such things as rain, sun, &c., or, fool, which do not admit of being numbered. When speaking of mistakes, it would be much better to say, "There are numerous mistakes," or "Mistakes are numerous." 2. It is incorrect

to say, "There are plenty of mistakes." 3. "Plenty" is a singular noun; the nominative case, to the verb to be; "mistakes" is a plural noun, in the objective case, after the preposition of; and "is" is the third person, singular, present tense, indicative mood of the verb to be, agreeing with its nominative plenty.

ELLA LURE.—The young fellow is evidently a confirmed flirt. A male flirt is a detestable being, and we should advise you to have nothing whatever to do with him. It is a pity you have cherished any regard for him. He will only trifle with you.

T. V.—You evidently have not as much faith in woman's word about her age as a man contemplating marriage ought to have. You certainly could not learn to love a woman after you had married her that you believed had wilfully deceived you.

A. R. V.—First call upon the young lady in company with a friend, and get a little better acquainted. Do not be afraid of her. You are evidently very young and inexperienced. You will get over your bashfulness in time.

J. S.—As soon as you have saved enough to begin housekeeping, and are getting a little more salary, you may safely ask the young lady to marry you. Do not be too timid. Bashfulness injures a young man in the estimation of young ladies.

M. J. B.—It is proper for a lady to take a gentleman's arm in the street in the evening. You cannot prevent your neighbours from commenting on your love affairs. It is natural for us all to take an interest in any development of the tender passion.

R. V. R.—There is no impropriety in shaking hands with a gentleman who has been properly introduced to you by a friend. When a gentleman calls, he should be introduced at once to your parents, that he may tell them who he is and establish himself in their good opinion.

A. Z.—Although the impression is very wide-spread that a human body is heavier after than before death, there is no ground for the belief, which probably originated from the fact that even the weakest living person clings, in some degree, to anyone who attempts to carry him, and so is more easily borne than a corpse.

EMILY C. E.—The eyelashes should be clipped constantly, and the hair kept short and washed with a mixture of tincture of cantharides and sweet oil; any respectable chemist will give you the right proportions, as they vary with the amount of stimulant required for the promotion of the growth of the hair.

AN ANXIOUS GIRL.—It is difficult to advise without knowing the size and shape of the room. The breakfast table, however, should be in the centre, and the gifts displayed to the best advantage on another near by window. This latter table, procuring the wedding gifts to be of the usual kind, might be covered with a dark tablecloth.

N. T. R.—Do not marry until you can marry one whom you love. A loveless marriage is a sad affair. If you will divert your mind from a hopeless passion, you will not find it as difficult to love one whom you say is entirely worthy of you, and recommended by your mother. The stage is a poor place for a young lady without any particular gifts or training for it.

R. V. W.—The tenant has no right to cut down the trees unless that right is specifically given him in the lease. In legal terms such despoiling of the premises is called waste, and can readily be stopped by an appeal to the proper court. Any lawyer would know what to do in order to stop the waste. Should the tenant be so foolish as to disobey the order of the court, he could be fined and imprisoned.

ESTAMEN.—1. Very rude indeed; the lady should at once resent such conduct. 2. Coarse animal food, boiled pork, strong bacon, or salt beef would tend to the result named. Avoid these, take exercise, and live temperately. 3. Generally the kind of soap used. Oatmeal in the water would do very well. 4. Very neat and lady-like writing; with care it will develop into a capital hand.

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London: Published for the Proprietor, at 334, Strand, by J. B. STICK, and Printed by WOODFALL and KENDAL, Mitford Lane, Strand.